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## **The Death of Hiligaynon Terminologies in the Coastal Community in Northern Iloilo, Philippines**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Terminologies are part and parcel of any language. Its extinction affects the linguistic system and mechanism and the cultural identity it bears. This phenomenological study aimed to identify the unused Hiligaynon terminologies and their causes of death in the coastal communities. Thirty participants participated in the interview and triangulated using observation and focus group discussion. Results revealed 104 unused Hiligaynon terminologies. Based on thematic analysis, three emerging themes arose as causes of death of those terminologies. These were lack of intergenerational transmission, exposure to social media, and absence of those terminologies in daily conversation. Hiligaynon faces intuitively linguistic loss over the years, and its local terminologies are in danger and eventually become extinct in the future. Thus, it is recommended that concerned government agencies should strengthen the implementation of laws and policies about the protection and preservation of Hiligaynon terminologies and even other languages in the country.*

**KEYWORDS:** *death, Hiligaynon, terminologies, language, coastal community, Philippines*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Languages behave and change like living species, as indicated early by Charles Darwin. They display high diversity, differentiate in space and time, emerge and disappear. As with biodiversity estimates, the language diversity is unknown, and estimates fluctuate up to around 10,000 different spoken languages. Another element to consider is the internal diversity displayed by languages themselves, where—like subspecies— dialects abound (Sole, Corominas-Murtra & Fortuny, 2010).

Language diversity has become dramatically endangered in the past centuries due to the language shift from indigenous languages to other languages seen as socially and economically more advantageous, resulting in the death or doom of minority languages (Isern & Fort, 2015). Many languages worldwide are in grave danger of extinction (Amano et al., 2015; Osoba & Alebiosu, 2016). Considering these are mostly spoken, they are inherently vulnerable to extinction or death. Speakers have a proclivity to abandon it in favor of a more prestigious language, such as an official second language, or due to colonialism's deliberate policy of discouraging the development and use of indigenous languages for their selfish reasons (Osoba & Alebiosu, 2016).

South Asia is one of the linguistically diverse places in the world. It has always been a place with a high level of multilingualism and significant linguistic contact, resulting in frequent dramatic shifts, linguistic conflict and accommodation, and the emergence of new languages. Language obsolescence and loss are becoming increasingly apparent. The countries in this

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region with the most extensive linguistic diversity are prominently included in worldwide linguistic endangerment data (Cardoso, 2014).

The Philippines is undeniably linguistically varied due to its archipelagic nature (Reid, 2018). It has over [170 languages](#) and four that have no known remaining speakers (Ethnic Group of the Philippines, 2021). However, Asia's melting pot during the pre-colonial era was impacted by commerce and languages, from its northernmost to southernmost parts (Reid, 2018). Since the colonization of America, English has been the dominant language (Penino & Bradecina, 2018; Tirosh, 2021). In both basic and higher education, it has been used as a medium of instruction. Despite the national declaration of Filipino as the national language, it is a reality that different dialects exist in many rural regions, mainly where fishing villages are located (Penino & Bradecina, 2018; Bonifacio, Zaman, Prantilla-Arambala & Zarate, 2021). The Philippine government has promoted bilingual education at academic institutions in recent years, permitting English and Filipino as a medium of teaching. In recent years, children in basic education have been required to use vernacular language to enhance learning (Ball, 2014; Arias, 2016; Department of Education, 2016; Penino & Bradecina, 2018; Williams, Metila & Pradilla, 2018; Rappler Philippines, 2019).

According to current projections, only one-tenth of the languages today will survive into the twenty-first century. Languages are rapidly declining, with no signs of slowing. Many Filipino languages are on the verge of extinction (Ethnic Group of the Philippines, 2021). According to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), 11 of the indigenous languages of the country are "dying," while 28 are "in trouble" (Reysio-Cruz, 2019). In addition, the articles written by Reid (2018) boil down to the following idea: the Philippines' language policies, while well-crafted, do not ensure the preservation or protection of indigenous languages, particularly minority languages. It was downcasted that the government focused on promoting English and Filipino, a subtle form of linguistic imperialism. Many concepts in coastal environmental education have their origins in academic institutions that use English as the medium of instruction (Penino & Bradecina, 2018).

*Hiligaynon* is an Austronesian language spoken in the Philippines' Western Visayas region. It is primarily spoken in the provinces of Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Capiz, and Guimaras, and many parts of Mindanao, such as Koronadal City, South Sultan Kudarat, and parts of North Cotabato. Furthermore, Karay-a speakers in Antique, Aklanon, and Malaynon in Aklan, and Capiznon in Capiz speak it as a second language (Robles, 2012). However, users of this language are declining from 1948 to 1995, from 12% to 9.11% (Senate of the Philippines, 2007). More so, there is a shortage of literature recording the development of *Hiligaynon*, especially in coastal areas, since it fluctuated and nearly died out year after year. It affects transmission from one generation to generation, resulting in the endangerment of local terminologies in the community, later forgotten. Thus, this study aimed to identify and document the unused *Hiligaynon* terminologies in the coastal areas and elucidate the causes of its extinction to reiterate constructive policies for its preservation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study area**

This study was conducted at Estancia and Gigantes Islands, Northern Iloilo, Western Visayas, Philippines. These areas were chosen because of their nearshore location. Moreover, the

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researchers believed that the target participants of these areas could not encounter thorough assimilation and language shift.

Estancia is a municipality in the province of Iloilo on the seashore. The municipality covers 29.38 square kilometers (11.34 square miles) and accounts for 0.59% of the entire area of Iloilo. It has a population of 53,200 people based on the 2020 Census. It amounted to 2.59 % of Iloilo province's total population or 0.67% of the Western Visayas region's total population. According to these numbers, the population density is 1,811 people per square kilometer or 4,691 people per square mile.

Meanwhile, Gigantes Islands are part of the greater Western Visayas archipelago. It is the northernmost section of Iloilo province and a component of the municipality of Carles in Iloilo, Philippines. Gigantes Norte (North) and Gigantes Sur are the two largest islands, both in the Gigantes region (South Gigantes). It is predicted to have a population of 12,224 people. The two largest islands are Gigantes Norte and Gigantes Sur, consisting of 4 barangays: Asluman and Granada in the former, and Gabi and Lantangan in the latter. It also has 11 islets: Balbagon, Bantigue, Bulubadiang, Cabugao Daku, Cabugao Gamay, Gakit-Gakit, Gigantillo, Gigantito Gigantona, Pulupandan, and Uay Dahon.

### **Participants**

The participants were the purposefully selected thirty (30) elders of the coastal community. Their age ranged from fifty to sixty-five years old except for the first 5. This bracket was considered because some participants could barely speak and comprehend clearly, especially those above 65 years old.

The participants were chosen because they were considered cultural bearers and natives of the community. According to Madrona (2017), culture-bearers are people who have intentionally embodied culture and are in the process of conveying it. Migrants and those ages 49 and below were excluded from this study.

### **Procedure**

The researcher sought letters from the Local Government Unit (LGU), Municipal Inter-agency Taskforce, and barangay officials asking permission to commence the data collection in the study area. After the grant, participants were identified through the assistance of a key insider. They were oriented to the processes and informed of the ethical considerations about their rights and anonymity.

The semi-structured interview was employed to uncover the opinions, experiences, values, and other characteristics of the participants under study. It was undertaken to learn in-depth details about the interviewee's knowledge and viewpoint on a topic (Showcat & Parveen, 2017). However, participants could not identify the unused local terminologies directly because of senility. Thus, the narration was utilized to keep them speaking unconsciously. The researchers identified those terminologies and asked the participants to provide the meaning, adopting the subjective standpoint. Observation (Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018) and focus group discussion (Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017) gathered additional and genuine data by using one's senses and gaining a better understanding and essence similarities and differences in the participants' perspectives.

This study followed a simplified version of Hycner's explication process for phenomenological interview analysis (Fredman, 2017). The phases are the following:

Phase 1 - Bracketing and phenomenological reduction. The researcher put personal prejudices aside at this stage to have as subjective a role as possible in terms of the participants' essential opinions. This approach included repeatedly listening to the audio recording of each completed interview to obtain a feel of the entire situation. The methods for taking field notes and transcribing interviews had made significant contributions.

Phase 2 - Delineating units of meaning. At this point, the researcher isolated claims that were regarded as elucidating the phenomenon under investigation. They produced a list of units of importance for each interview and double-checked them for repetition. To avoid making wrong subjective judgments, they had to assess the units of meaning while simultaneously bracketing their findings, which was a challenging phase.

Phase 3 - Clustering of units of meaning to form themes. At this point, the researcher reviewed each interview's lists of units of meaning, bracketing findings once more to stay true to the phenomenon of interest and then clustering them into clusters. They then attempted to make sense of the groups, which were transformed into significant themes. Given the existence of human phenomena, clusters are likewise expected at this time.

Phase 4 - Summarizing each interview, validating and modifying where necessary. At this point, the researchers addressed the participants to determine if the interview's significance had been correctly documented. Adjustments were made where needed. They used this stage to evaluate both the interview transcripts and the overall character of the interviews to avoid contacting participants needlessly.

Stage 5 - Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary. After applying the first four procedures for each interview, the researcher looked at the explicated data to determine any common trends across most or all of the interviews.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Unused local terminologies and their meaning**

Below are the unused Hiligaynon local terminologies and their corresponding meanings as identified and given by the participants during the interview. These were validated for the younger generation aging from 12 to 18 years old in terms of familiarity. Terminologies were excluded from the list once recognized as familiar.

Terms	Part of Speech	Meaning in English
Apa	Noun	A piece of wood
Badlong	Verb	Act of restraining someone
Balik-awot	Adverb	Done differently
Banihot	Adjective	Meticulous
Birtuldo	Adjective	Stubborn
Dalawat	Verb	To buy
Dam-uyan	Verb	To wash
Gapangusisa	Verb	Investigating
Gapirme	Verb	Stay
Gasaplid	Verb	Touching

Gaud	Verb	To row
Gina-ukib-ukib	Adjective	Gradual
Gubaton	Verb	To see someone
Halaguyon	Verb	Asking someone to go with
Hangkilan	Adjective	Skillful
Hangop	Verb	Understand
Han-usan	Verb	To hit something
Haris	Verb	To smack
Hinambit	Verb	Being said
Huna-huna	Noun	Thought
Ibog	Noun	Envy
Ino-ino	Noun	Mind
Intsindido	Verb	Knowing how to do something
Kahimtangan	Noun	Situation
Kainayahan	Noun	Attitude
Kalaruton	Noun	Something to eat
Kalasakan	Noun	Forest
Kalat	Noun	Rope
Kalikuyan	Adjective	Unconscious
Karaan	Adjective	Old or used object
Kayog	Noun	A tool used in farming
Kilis	Verb	To wash
Kurob	Noun	Small house
Kutsitsa	Noun	Season
Lahi	Adjective	Different
Lakot-lakot	Noun	A menu of mixed vegetables
Laman	Noun	Fishnet
Lamgod	Adverb	Not so many
Lapad mata	Adjective	Observant
Linghod	Adjective	Young
Lumbayag	Verb	Roam around
Luto	Verb	To stay overnight
Mabuok	Verb	Steam inhalation
Maghirupay	Verb	Understand each other
Maibitar	Verb	Stop
Makadangan	Verb	To arrive or to come closer
Makasaboy	Verb	Visit
Mali-mali	Adjective	Panicking
Manaya-naya	Noun	Peaceful
Mandu-an	Verb	Ask to do something
Mangunapin	Verb	To side with
Manigar	Verb	To control
Manigulang	Adjective	Growing up in a certain place
Masami	Adverb	Always
Matigda	Verb	Able to speak
Moda	Noun	Style



Nagkunol	Verb	Malfunction
Namat-an	Verb	Used to while growing up
Namitlang	Verb	Being said
Nanuhay-tuhay	Adjective	Diverse
Napung-an	Verb	Cannot breathe properly
Napung-aw	Adjective	Feel bored
Natubu-an buot	Verb	To be matured
Padiyos	Noun	Ways
Pagawi	Noun	Manner of action
Paghinun-anon	Noun	Understanding
Pagiya	Verb	To guide
Pagsinundanay	Noun	Companionship
Pahilos	Noun	Additional expenses
Pananglit	Noun	Example
Pangambang	Verb	To stop
Pasan-an	Verb	To give an ultimatum
Pasikawan	Verb	To find ways
Pasipad-an	Verb	To relinquish
Paslak	Verb	Dumb into a place
Patuloy	Noun	Catch
Patumbayaan	Verb	To relinquish
Perdubal	Adjective	Pedantic
Pigos	Verb	Force
Pisitas	Noun	20 cents
Pisong	Noun	Farm
Pono	Noun	A type of radio
Por mayor	Noun	Buyer
Puat	Verb	To cease
Pulakan	Noun	A measuring cup of rice
Pulungko	Verb	Being said
Putoro	Noun	Future
Sablawon	Verb	To stop someone from doing unacceptable action
Sil-on	Verb	A process of removing one side of the scallop shell without taking its meat
Singki	Adjective	Angry
Sirom	Noun	Dawn
Sumag	Verb	To make a fish net
Suweto	Verb	To discipline
Tamod	Preposition	In front
Tanlas	Adjective	Retentive
Tapangko	Noun	Stool in the wet market
Telegrama	Noun	Letter
Tibaw	Verb	To pull
Tudok	Verb	To instill
Tungod	Preposition	Near

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Tutos	Verb	To sew
Ugtom	Verb	To control a specific emotion
Ulihing-tubo	Noun	New generation
Wala liwan	Adjective	No other

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### **Causes of death of Hiligaynon terminologies**

Linguistic categories and expressions of vocabulary and word choice are represented by fishing communities' life views as cultural bearers of knowledge systems (cognition) documented in language as an inherent part of the culture, either implicitly or openly (*Chafidhi, Rais & Purnanto, 2019*). It survived and continued to be used in many places (mainly in rural regions) by a considerable population. It may have been particularly the case in territories with a strong regional identity (*McColl Millar, 2016*).

However, the surrounding environment, especially the geographical state of cultural society, impacts human mental development. The greater the level of community mobilization in a strategic area, the higher the level of community mobilization is. The greater the mobilization of the speech community, the greater the acculturation of culture is. The more varied the community's culture is, the more diverse the communication language patterns are. It results in loss of local inheritance (linguicide) with the community's archipelago language. Thus, it decreases speakers' loyalty (*Tiani, 2020*). As a result, young generations may substitute terminologies from the dominant culture with subsequent progression to a complete switch of only speaking the dominant language where the family blends, fits in and advances it (*Amin, 2012*).

The results revealed three major themes as causes of death of *Hiligaynon* terminologies in the coastal community. These included lack of intergenerational transmission, exposure to social media, and absence in daily conversation.

#### *Lack of intergenerational transmission*

Participants perceived the lack of intergenerational transmission (*Rogers & Campbell, 2015*) as one of the causes of the death of the *Hiligaynon* terminologies in the coastal community. They pointed out the family members' significant roles in teaching their children since basic education began at home (*Yu, 2013*). Also, they were more semantically and syntactically knowledgeable compared to other relatives (*Schwartz & Verschik, 2013*). Through their influence on linguistic input, they can transmit information. It means that children who live with family members who do not speak an indigenous language are at risk (*UNESCO, 2019*). It is also evitable that those who were living with grandparents or other indigenous language speakers are more likely to speak one (*Birner, n.d.*). They said, "To have those words used until now, the immediate family must teach their children those words. It is correct that those words will eventually be forgotten once it is not done."

Furthermore, they believed that when there was an active transmission among their children, there was a greater chance of survival of those local terms since they knew and understood them (*Kirsch, 2012*). The new generation would be able to use it in their discourse and could mainstream to their fellows and the community (*Garbes, 2012*). However, some of them failed to do so because they considered it a waste of time (*World Vision, 2017*). In every unfamiliar local term their children did not understand, they paused and explained it, which consumed their time and impeded their respective work. It brought psychological and

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behavioral issues (Wymbs & Pelham, 2010). Children became hesitant to ask the meaning of those words and anxious to get reprimanded every time they needed clarification (Lee, 2021). Instead, they would remain silent, forego those terms misunderstood, and eventually forget it. They emphasized, “We do not have the time to explain everything. It is better if we were sitting around so that we can entertain their concerns.”

On the contrary, some participants let their children understand the words. They patiently explained the meaning and the usage of the terms. They also believed that children were well-informed to become the bearers of those terms to pass on to the next generation (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). They mouthed, “In our case, we explain the terms if they do not know. It is our responsibility as parents to teach them so that they know the meaning if they encounter it in the future.”

Another factor of the unsuccessful transmission was the death of the elders (Khawaja, 2021). Their composition in the community had diminished over time (Badana & Andel, 2018). It led to surmount the number of speakers of those local terms. They said, “Many of the elders are already dead. Few of them were alive. Eventually, their death is the disappearance of those words which were seldom used here.”

Not all living elders use those words in daily communication (Bonifacio, Zaman, Prantilla-Arambala & Zarate, 2021). They chose the terms that they could easily understand by their children. By that, they conveniently patterned it to the language of the present generation (Chang-Castillo, 2019). Local terms come out unconsciously when they speak with their contemporaries. They stated, “We spoke with their language to easily understand because there is no understanding if we used the local terms before. They would ask the meaning. It is better to speak in our own language for our comfort.”

#### *Exposure to social media of the new generation*

Participants claimed that the death of the *Hiligaynon* terminologies in the coastal community was attributed to the exposure of the new generation in social media (Waldegrave, 2017). They observed that some children were no longer initiating conversation and mingling with others (Jacobson, 2017). They preferred to sit, use their mobile phones, and spend most of their time on social media platforms (Frith, 2017). More so, the pandemic worsened this situation, in which movement restrictions were strictly observed (Patra, Chilukuri & Vanajakshi, 2021). Since children were disallowed to go out freely, they opted to browse their social media to entertain themselves (Morris & Sarapin, 2020). They could virtually communicate with their friends who spoke the exact words.

Moreover, their exposure was alleviated because some teachers were reaching out through Messenger (Amin & Sundari, 2020). They used it to communicate if there were announcements and served as repositories of their supplemental instructional materials (Comi et al., 2017). These attributions lessened their opportunity to learn the local terms used by the elders (Drouin, McDaniel, Pater & Toscos, 2020) since there was no communication and interaction among them. Thus, the succession would fail. They said, “Our children are fun of using Facebook on their mobile phones. They are not playing anymore. When we ask them, they speak few words only. One question equals one answer. Sometimes, we confiscate the phones to limit their exposure if we get mad. If we keep on letting them, it will leads to eye problems in the futurm.”



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*Absence in daily conversation*

The survival of the *Hiligaynon* terminologies depended on the context of using it every day (White, 2016). It would boost and condition one's mind and process it to long-term memory. Hence, participants believed in the significance of using those words in daily conversation with their children. It mitigated retention due to exposure. However, some participants failed to do it because they had already adopted the new generation's language (Bezioglu-Goktolga & Yagmur, 2022). When speaking, they did not utilize the terms they were used to. Instead, they spoke and synchronized the exact words to communicate successfully (Savage, 2021). They further reasoned that the terminologies of the past might not be applicable in the present (Dörnyei, 2019). Hence, there was a language shift to harmonize the current trend (Ravindranath, 2017). They mouthed, “We are no longer using those terms because it is not used in the present. If you speak it with the young ones, they do not understand it. So, it is better to communicate what they are used to.”

In addition, participants included the frequency of communication between them and their children (Runcan, Constantineanu, Ielics & Popa, 2012) as another contributing factor. They had limited conversation and minimal instances to speak with them deeply. Most of the time, the situation was more of asking them to help with household chores. There was no intense exchange of conversation like sharing of experiences and storytelling. They rationalized that this was due to psychosocial issues in which their children were shy and hesitant to open up, especially if it involved personal matters (Jiménez et al., 2019). They further agreed that their children were more comfortable being with their peers than them (Knudsen, 2017). With this, there was a low chance of the survival of the local terms in the past because there was no medium for channeling, and eventually, no one used it. Thus, those terms would disappear unconsciously (Jacob, 2014). They said, “We are not talking most of the time. Sometimes, we just asked to buy this or if we needed help. But when it comes to sharing, we do not do that, unlike before when we asked our grandparents to tell us stories. As I noticed, the younger generation is not open and uninterested in hearing stories. I do not know the reason. That is why, we say, our age is far from theirs.”

## **CONCLUSION**

Hiligaynon has faced linguistic loss over the years. Its local terminologies are in danger and will eventually become extinct. This issue has been traced to the existence of the elders in the community. Their role is critical in the preservation since they are the speakers. Their failure manifests a language shift in which the new generation uses what is generally spoken. Thus, communication plays a mediator to hand on those local terminologies successfully. It should be used in daily conversation to expose the new generation. As a result, they will use it with other people in different communicative settings. However, the generation gap has seen to meddle in this process. The new generation is unopened to talking with their parents and grandparents because of emotional barriers and cultural conventions. Their interest is diverted to social media, which consumes most of their time. It has been exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 in education and settled in blended learning. Correspondingly, they have a limited actual conversation which hinders the possible transmission of Hiligaynon terminologies.

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## RECOMMENDATION

Language is part and parcel of any community because it allows its members to communicate and express themselves. When a language goes extinct, the new generation loses one part of their culture, essential in understanding it. It makes it susceptible facet of cultural heritage and needs to be preserved. Thus, concerned government agencies should strengthen the implementation of laws and policies about the protection and preservation of *Hiligaynon* local terminologies and other languages in the country, which will be cascaded to its counterpart in local communities. More so, the inclusion of mother-tongue in education should be recalibrated, revitalized, and treated as English and Filipino. The scope will not focus merely on grades 1 to 3 but will be extended until senior high school. It will provide vast exposure and usage among the learners and grasp the denotation of those Hiligaynon local terminologies.

Furthermore, non-government organizations are encouraged to work hand in hand with the government considering its resources and expertise in designing programs and projects to help save those terminologies. In addition, elders and parents should have constant communication with the new generation, which provides an avenue to delimit from the conventional barrier and converse freely. Moreover, the new generation should allot their time learning those terminologies for it mirrors the richness of their culture. Consequently, they will serve as the medium of effective and successful transgenerational transmission to the future generations to come.

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