

Matigsalug Linguistic Landscape of Sinuda, Kitaotao, Bukidnon, Philippines

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Abstract— Studies on the indigenous linguistic landscape provide an overview of the condition of the indigenous languages. This paper aims to explore the linguistic landscape of the Matigsalug people in Sinuda, Kitaotao, Bukidnon, Philippines using review of literature. This paper shows that the Matigsalug language has experienced language change and borrowings and language assimilation. Also, the dominance of the English language has been observed across the country. The language policies in the Philippines may be revisited to cater to the situation of the indigenous languages. This paper concludes that the integration of indigenous languages, such as the Matigsalug, in the sector of education may provide a better linguistic position for these endangered languages.

Keywords— Bukidnon: indigenous linguistic landscape: linguistic landscape: Matigsalug language.

I. INTRODUCTION

There have been studies on the linguistic landscape of the Philippines such as De Los Reyes (2014) that focused on the Metro Rail Transit and Light Rail Transit in Manila in their signages, Esteron (2021) on the Philippine churches in their signages which he called 'churchscape,' Doroja-Cadiente and Valdez (2019) on the public signs of Tacloban City after the typhoon Haiyan, Monje (2017) on protest materials in Manila during the burial of the late President Ferdinand Marcos Sr, and many other scholars who were interested in linguistic landscape research. However, a few studies centred on the linguistic landscape of indigenous cultural communities such as Sheng and Buchanan (2022) in China's ancient waterfront towns, Córdova Hernández et al. (2017) in Mexico, Salo (2012) in North Calotte, Valijärvi and Kahn (2020) in Nuuk, Greenland, and many others.

Further, indigenous studies in Bukidnon, Philippines were conducted. For instance, Bonifacio et al. (2021) on the conversation skills of Bukidnon and Talaandig, Bonifacio (2021) on the identity of Manobo people, Alejan et al. (2021) and Lantaya et al. (2021) on language preservation and revitalisation of Bukidnon and Philippine indigenous languages. Nonetheless, these studies were not specific to the linguistic landscape of the province. Although the Matigsalug language has been studied by Wang et al. (2006), the linguistic landscape of the Matigsalug people is not yet explored.

This paper discusses the linguistic landscape of the Matigsalug community by highlighting the language change and borrowings, language assimilation, prestige of the English language, and the language policy of the province.

II. LANGUAGE CHANGE AND BORROWINGS

Language change and borrowings are crucial linguistic developments in the Philippines. The intersection point between two or more speech communities has a higher chance of language borrowings and changes. Tracking the history and geographical locations of the regions where Philippine languages are spoken, languages that are in contact with each other share similar linguistic features (Gonzales, 2017; Larson, 1963). Despite the close language contact, their grammatical features remain intact, although some alterations in pronunciation and vocabulary are observable.

Various foreign languages were in contact with Philippine languages in the past. Speakers from India, China, Saudi Arabia, Persia, Spain, and United States of America interacted with Filipinos in the past; as a result, various lexical borrowings and phonological influences can be observed (Adelaar, 2004). In fact, Philippine languages are the offspring of the Austronesian group of languages from Taiwan, and this group originally came between South China and North Southeast Asia from 6000 to 3000 BC (Bellwood, 2006). From Taiwan, the Austronesian is divided into Formosan and Malayo-Polynesian, where the latter is the main umbrella of Philippine languages, which happened from 3000 to 2000 BC (Bellwood, 2006). Indian language, particularly Sanskrit, influenced Philippine languages through interaction with the Malays since the Indians networked with the Malays and other neighbouring regions from 400 to 500 AD (Adelaar, 2004). From 1521 to 1898, the Spanish colonisation also impacted the Philippines through language borrowings and the creation of a Spanish creole named Chavacano (Adelaar, 2004; Gonzales, 2017). From 1898 to 1946, the American invasion brought the English language to the country, which remained a vital channel of communication across institutions (Gonzales, 2017). Although some vocabulary items from these languages were borrowed by Philippine languages, the orthography of some of these words followed the spelling convention of the Philippine languages that borrowed them (Hemphill, 1962, p. 32; Larson, 1963; McFarland, 2004).

Baklanova (2017) outlined the borrowings of Tagalog in other languages. Contemporary Tagalog integrates nonce borrowings such as kina- 'shock', where an English word is added with a Tagalog bound morpheme; assimilated borrowings such as lumpia from Hokkien lunpia, haraya from Sanskrit heart or soul, and dimpol from English dimple; mixed borrowings such as largo bista from Spanish largo ('telescope') and vista ('sight'); semantic extension such as

sektaryo from Spanish secretario ('assistant'); phonetic extensions such as tipon from Spanish tipo (a type); loan creations such as agham panlipunan from English social science; and many others. Kuizon (1964) investigated borrowings in Cebuano from Sanskrit, Javanese, and Malay languages. For example, the Cebuano bahin (share) is taken from Sanskrit bhagin, Javanese bagi, and Malay behagi; bahandi (property, wealth) from Sanskrit bhanda, Javanese banda, and Malay benda; tingga (lead) from Sanskrit tivra, Javanese timbrah, and Malay timah, and many others. In addition, Kuizon included the vowel and consonant modifications of Cebuano under the influence of Sanskrit, where there are shortening of vowels, glottalisations, central vowel substitutions, initial and final vowel exclusions, alveolar-semi vowels from Sanskrit retroflex /r/, omissions of consonant aspirations, substitution of alveolar stops from Sanskrit retroflex stops, Cebuano consonants with Sanskrit affricates and fricatives, Cebuano alveo-palatal fricatives from Sanskrit retroflex sibilants, and many others (Kuizon, 1964).

Since language is dynamic (Aitchison, 2001), these changes are brought by the complex process of gradual or radical phonological, morphological, or syntactic shifts (Campbell & Barlow, 2020). Campbell and Barlow (2020) explain that language change affects the learning and understanding of language users, but it fosters better sound production and comprehension. With the inevitability of changes in the language system, the social and political circumstances in a linguistic community bring language evolution (Aitchison, 2001).

In terms of language change and borrowings, the Matigsalug language loaned some alphabets that do not exist in their language such as c, f, j, o, q, v, x, and z, especially when borrowing words from English and Filipino (Wang et al., 2006). With the advancement of technology, some words in English do not have any equivalent to the Matigsalug language. In effect, the Matigsalug language borrowed some lexical items related to farming, food, well-being, sanitation, technology, and transportation. For instance, words such as cake, cellphone, chat, computer, Facebook, internet, macaroni, spaghetti, tractor, vitamins, wifi, and YouTube were integrated into their language.

III. LANGUAGE ASSIMILATION

Language assimilation is another development in the Philippine languages. One of the crucial effects of language assimilation is the certain death of a particular language, most especially when the younger generations use a different language compared to the tongue spoken by their parents (McFarland, 2004). Also, a language dies because of a lack of social and political status caused by the hegemony of dominant languages (Aitchison, 2001). For instance, the hegemonic advantage of the Ilocano language gradually replaces the Isinai and other northern languages because the Ilokano language is generally spoken in Northern Philippines.

Language death usually happens to a language used by a small number of speakers. Indigenous languages, particularly in Mindanao, are gradually being replaced by Cebuano, Filipino, English, and other major languages because these

languages are used in various settings such as in the classroom, market, workplace, and other private and public spaces (Bonifacio, 2021; Bonifacio et al., 2021). The political and social advantage of Cebuano makes it easier for them to use this language compared to their native language.

In the province of Bukidnon, the lingua franca is Cebuano. Because of that, the transcendence of their indigenous languages has been disrupted. For instance, the Matigsalug people in Sinuda in the municipality of Kitaotao, including the Manobo indigenous cultural community in Lumintao in the municipality of Quezon and the Bukidnon and Talaandig people in Malaybalay City, become multilingual speakers since English and Filipino are introduced in the classroom and Cebuano is generally used in their communities (Bonifacio, 2021; Bonifacio et al., 2021). It is sad to note that there are indigenous peoples in these communities that do not speak their native tongue such as the Matigsalug, Manobo, Bukidnon, and Talaandig languages because they are afraid of discrimination, alienation, and bullying (Bonifacio, 2021; Bonifacio et al., 2021). Also, this scenario occurs because of the migration of indigenous peoples to other places, migration of people outside their kin to their communities, intermarriage between an indigenous and a non-indigenous husband or wife, and pursuit of basic and higher education.

Although the tribal elders and members of their community seek to uphold their autochthonous languages, the community where these indigenous peoples live also has a huge role in protecting these languages by respecting and supporting their unique linguistic and cultural expressions and identities. If the Philippines will not institute and support the creation of a stronger language policy for the indigenous languages, the time may come when these languages may become annihilated. Even though the government instituted a decree that safeguards the autochthonous peoples' language, culture, and heritage through the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (Presidential Communications Operations Office, 1997, para. 2), this law is not enough to defend them because there are instances that they are exploited, discriminated, underrepresented, and abused.

IV. PRESTIGE OF ENGLISH

The English language has become a language of prestige in the Philippines. With the economic advantage of the English language, its prominence is maintained even after the invasion of the Americans (McFarland, 2008). With the advancement of education, technology, business, transportation, and other factors, English has become the lingua franca across the world. The English language becomes an integral part to almost all Filipinos, especially those who study from grade school to college because it is useful in academic learning, social interaction, and employment (Hemphill, 1962; Madrunio et al., 2016; Mahboob & Cruz, 2013).

Even with the introduction and instruction of English at a young age, Filipino learners fall behind in other countries in various English proficiency evaluations. For example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) placed the Philippines in the 79th rank in reading in English with 340 compared to the average score of 487 in 2018 across

the world (Programme for International Student Assessment, 2018). Because of these poor results in English, the Department of Education designed the Sulong Edukalidad, which aimed to evaluate the implementation of the K-12 educational programme, provide better school services, offer enhanced teacher and school head training activities, and collaborate with stakeholders for the advancement of education in the Philippines (Briones, 2019).

Also, the Hopkins International Partners scored Filipino graduates' English proficiency using the Test of English for International Communication with 631.14 in 2018, which was lower than Dubai cab drivers. With this poor result, Senator Grace Poe, through Senate Resolution No. 622, requested an assessment of the pedagogy of English in basic and college education and suggests refining the instruction of English and improving the communication skills of Filipinos using international criteria (Poe, 2018). In addition to the problems, a British Council-sponsored roundtable discussion pointed out the weaknesses of the Philippine educational system in delivering quality English proficiency to their students (Cabigon, 2015). To resolve this issue, experts suggested that ESL institutions need to hire qualified ESL teachers, find answers to ESL problems, integrate tourism activities in their classes, provide quality teacher training development, cooperate with government and non-government institutions in designing relevant programmes, and forge linkages with international organisations (Cabigon, 2015).

V. LANGUAGE POLICY

English and Filipino have been integrated into the Philippine educational system since grade school, but it is different now because kindergarten up to third-grade pupils are exposed to their mother tongue (Department of Education, 2008, 2012, 2016). With the introduction of the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education, the eight major languages and other regional languages are utilised such as Tagalog, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Iloko (Ilocano), Bikol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Maguindanaoan, Maranao, and Chabacano (Chavacano) in the classroom for kindergarten and third-grade pupils (Department of Education, 2012). However, other languages, particularly the indigenous languages, were not included because of the lack of teachers who could speak the language and the absence of teaching materials specially written in their language. As an effect, it became mandatory for some learners to use their regional language, not necessarily their first language.

This scenario is also true among the Matigsalug people because aside from learning English and Filipino, the two mediums of instruction, they are also required to learn Cebuano because it is the regional language of Region X (Northern Mindanao) and the lingua franca of the province of Bukidnon. Although there were efforts to introduce the Matigsalug to their young learners, only a few teachers can speak their language.

The language policy of the Philippines is socially and linguistically disadvantageous to the indigenous cultural communities. Even though the Department of Education hired indigenous teachers to teach the learners their first language,

there are a few of them to cater to the huge population of indigenous peoples. It is also helpful if the Department of Education will initiate programmes that will generate learning materials using the indigenous languages of their learners. This effort will ensure the transcendence of the indigenous languages across generations because it is not only their homes that their first language is used but also their classrooms.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined an overview of the linguistic landscape of the Philippines, particularly among the Matigsalug people. It has shown that indigenous languages such as the Matigsalug are in an unfavourable position compared to the dominant languages because the language policy of the country favours the major and regional languages.

To achieve the importance of the minor languages, specifically the indigenous languages, the Department of Education may hire more teachers who can speak these languages and commence writing books and materials in their languages. In that way, the indigenous languages will be taught, transcended, and passed to the next generations.

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