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## MORTALITY EFFECT OF MODERNIZATION TO ETHNOLINGUISTIC OF IRAYA-MANGYAN

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### Abstract

*Iraya Mangyan is one of the seven tribes scattered along Occidental and Oriental Mindoro. The Iraya Mangyan language is classified as Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, North Mangyan language (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2019). Iraya Mangyan doesn't have scripts, the only ethnolinguistic practice is through speaking. Moreover, Iraya Mangyan intonation is similar to Pangasinan (Twedel, 1958). In addition, Iraya dialect is different from other languages in Mindoro in terms of pronominal forms and functions, noun phrases structures, verb structure patterns, word order, and other sentential features (Reid, 2017). Characteristically, Iraya Mangyans are persuasive on their tribal rich discipline-based culture and industrious work ethics. However, they are presently being influenced by Tagalog people due to frequent mingling with them. This situation causes most of the Iraya Mangyan to forget how to speak their mother tongue especially Iraya residing in Oriental Mindoro and little by little, in Occidental Mindoro. Before Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) curriculum implementation, all minority schools followed the common curriculum, the students in the tribe accept more Tagalog speaking practices than their mother tongue. Through the IPEd curriculum, they are now regaining the mother tongue-based education concern, but still, the number of students attending schools is not stable. Even though the IPEd curriculum was implemented, many of the Iraya Mangyans are not practicing their mother tongue language due to the people they frequently engage (Tagalog) with and their lack of interest to preserve their language. The characteristics of Iraya students were described as timid especially to visitors (Tagalog). Hence, the Iraya Mangyan teachers may probably a good instrument in continuing their education as well as preserving the ethnolinguistic practice of Iraya Mangyan.*

*Keywords: Iraya Mangyan, Ethnolinguistic, Mother tongue, Mindoro*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mindoro is one of the largest islands in the Philippines and divided into two provinces which are Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro (MHC, 2000). "Mangyan" is a terminology used to describe the (8) eight indigenous groups living in Mindoro namely Alangan, Bangon, Buhid, Hanunoo, Iraya, Ratagnon, Tadyawan, and Tau-buid. Different tribes use different languages (Barbian, 1997) but often referred to as the Mangyan language.

The term Iraya is used to describe the person speaking the Iraya-Mangyan language. In the research conducted by Bawagan (2008), the Iraya Mangyan identity is a combination of the primordial and transactional elements grouped according to their ancestors, territory, arts, languages, traditional practices and their adoption of survival strategies. Based on the article by Reid (2017), there were seven languages spoken on the island. Additionally, Iraya tribe are scattered on the areas of Occidental Mindoro, mainly in the town of Abra de Ilog, Mamburao, and Paluan and scattered in the towns of Sitio Talipanan Barangay Aninuán, Anilao, and Puerto Galera-Calipan road. In Oriental Mindoro, mainly in the towns of Puerto Galera, San Teodoro, and Baco; and scattered in Barangay Baclayán (Ethnic Groups Philippines, 2019).

Iraya language is unique due to its pronouns, personal noun and non-personal noun phrases, gender distinction, subordinating linker and verbal structures which are uncommon for the language in the Philippines. Also, there were some lexical items between Kapampangan and Iraya (Reid, 2017). According to the location

map, Iraya is the northern part of the island, and Iraya adopts the lifestyle of the Tagalog in the most adjacent across the Batangas area of Luzon where Tagalog is the main language. According to the Mangyan Heritage Center, Iraya living in the mountains still practices the culture of the tribe and speaking their language. The minority schools in remote areas are the basic source of education of the Iraya living in the mountain areas.

## 2. Iraya Mangyan Language

Ethnolinguistics is described by Cook (2014) as the relationship of both language and culture including the perception of ethnic people about the world. It is a part of anthropological linguistics concerned with the study of the interrelation between a language and the cultural behavior of a certain group of people (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). Ethnolinguistics is very essential in understanding and preserving the cultures and traditions of indigenous people. However, the diversity of language according to the United Nations (2008) is threatened to become extinct due to several factors. The Philippines, where an estimated 14-17 million Indigenous Peoples making the country culturally diverse with 110 ethnolinguistic groups (UNDP, 2010) is not exempted from this threat. These Philippine-Indigenous Peoples were classified by Castro (n.d.) as Northern Luzon's people of the Cordillera and Cagayan Valley; Mindoro Island's Mangyans; Peoples of Palawan Islands; Central Philippine's island peoples; Mindanao Island's Lumads; and the peoples who are scattered and dwelling in major islands of the country, the Negritos. The focus of this study is the status of the language of the Mangyan tribe in the Philippines particularly the Iraya.

The indigenous languages pertain to the dialects of people in a community. Similarly, Castro (n.d.) described the Mangyan community as a general term for the indigenous peoples of the Island of Mindoro. It comprises groups of peoples: Hanunoo; Batangan; Alangan; Bangon; Buhid; Gubatnon, Ratagnon, and Iraya. Accordingly, the Hanunoos are unique due to their preservation of ancient Filipino syllabic script. However, the Iraya Language doesn't have a clear scripture of their language and today, only a few of them speak the language as mentioned by the mayor of the Iraya-Mangyan tribe in Karyandangan, Occidental Mindoro. Nevertheless, Reid (2017) stressed that the Iraya-Mangyan tribe dialect is diverse due to populations from two provinces, Oriental and Occidental Mindoro. Additionally, he documented that the Iraya dialect differs uniquely from other languages in Mindoro and the Philippines in terms of pronominal forms and functions, noun phrases structures, verb structure patterns, word order, and other sentential features. Specifically, Reid (2017) stressed the following features of Iraya language:

- a.) Personal Pronouns
  - a.1 There is a single form for each function of all non-singular personal pronouns;
  - a.2 each corresponding plural forms have dual forms;
  - a.3 Iraya pronouns are inherited forms that are borrowed from neighboring languages like Brunie Dusun of Borneo; and
  - a.4 there are no enclitic forms in Iraya
- b.) Noun Phrases
  - b.1 Noun phrase marking for the case and personal nouns are loss;
  - b.2 gender distinctions for personal names is developed;
  - b.3 subordinating ligatures are loss; and
  - b.4 there are two monosyllabic forms of introducing noun phrases which makes noun phrases markings unique.
- c.) Other structural features
  - c.1) the most habitually used monosyllabic form is the word "ba", and
  - c.2) to emphasize potential or future forms, the perfective forms of verbs are used.

The documentation of Reid (2017) emphasized that Iraya Language has features that distinguished them from other languages of Mangyan tribes. Additionally, the interview conducted by the researchers suggests that modern Iraya people are still using the Language but not clear on what extent the language is being used. The discussion on the succeeding sections will further expound the status of Iraya Language as described by the people of Iraya in Occidental Mindoro.

## 3. Iraya Mangyan Language Education Before

Man, or adult is the denotation of the word "Iraya" and it has several forms of dialect such as Alag-Bako, Pagbahan, Abra-De-Ilog, Palauan-Calavite, Santa Cruz, and Pambuhan. Also, Iraya is a Western Austronesian language utilized in the Northern part of Mindoro (Tweddel, 1958). In the study of Reid (2017), he mentioned

that there is a possibility that languages of people of Mindoro originated or may be influenced by several interactions of native people to visitors from China and Muslim slave raiders as based on story literature of Iraya people. These data could stress that there is a modification of Iraya language as early as in the year 1574 as mentioned by Reid. However, the Mangyan Language Education of Iraya could hardly trace back on how it develops or how it deteriorates through time. However, the researchers found out from the Mangyan Heritage Center that Iraya people did not write or do not write words or sentences using their language. Also, it was stressed by the Mangyan Heritage Center that Iraya people do not have a proper education, instead, they only work to earn a living. There was no chance of documenting their language because they do not write, but they only speak the language. This was confirmed when the researchers interviewed the Iraya People of Occidental Mindoro. The respondents asserted that they do not have a writing system or even symbols of writing. This means that if there would be no Iraya people who will speak of the language, there will come a time that the dialect will become extinct. Hence, the government of the Philippines is giving education to modern Iraya people as a program to protect them and their culture as Indigenous peoples. However, the question that is needed to be considered is that, will it educate the Iraya people to cultivate their language or the other way around? Further analysis of this question is to be elaborated, explained, and examined through relevant and recent facts and situations of the indigenous peoples, especially for the Iraya-Mangyan people.

#### 4. Iraya Mangyan Language Education at Present

Education is the advancement of skills, character, mind, and knowledge through the process of formal or non-formal schooling (Collins Dictionary, 2019). Education is considered as a necessity for many people because it is a way to make them have a better living. The Department of Education in the Philippines encourages all Filipinos to enroll and enjoy free education. The government of the Philippines reforms education as stated in the Philippine Development plan 2017-2022. Also, the Philippine government according to Macha, Mackie, & Magaziner (2018) aimed to reduce poverty and inequalities in rural areas. However, they also stressed that educational standards in the Philippines were declining as reflected in the international assessment test performance of Filipino students. Despite these situations, indigenous knowledge systems revitalization was acknowledged and recognized globally especially the indigenous languages (Degawan, 2019).

The Department of Education in the Philippines supports the global call for strengthening the preservation of indigenous people's traditions and cultures. The department enhanced the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) through conducting expressive dialogue among the IP elders in the community (Alcober, 2018). This dialogue could be one of the responses of the DepEd about the report of Virola (2015) that education for Mangyan people is still a challenge. According to Virola's (2015) report, non-Mangyan people took advantage of their lands showing documents that they owned their lands driving away the native Mangyans. This situation could have made education harder for Mangyans to reach schools. Furthermore, it was also reported that native Mangyan like "Juanito Jr." who finished college with cum laude distinction has to travel two hours and have to cross rivers to serve in Nuajan's Bucayao Grande Mangyan School. This encouragement to serve back their community is highly recommended for native Mangyans to educate their fellows. However, the question is, how do they educate their fellow natives? Are they teaching or using a curriculum that will enrich their culture as Mangyans? These questions are very crucial for Indigenous Peoples' protection and preservation of their cultures and traditions.

In the study of Bawagan (2008), she described how teachers teach the Mangyan children including their comments about educating the natives. Her respondents compose of a male Iraya teacher, two female Tagalog teachers, and one male Tagalog teacher. Accordingly, the four teachers are using DepEd's curriculum. The Iraya male teacher struggles to teach their culture of Iraya because there is a need to ask permission from his Tagalog supervisor. Moreover, the male Iraya teacher does not have a wide idea on how to teach culturally-relevant curriculum because he was exposed to the current or latest curriculum in his undergraduate years. Furthermore, the other Tagalog teachers experience awkwardness among the children they teach when it comes to discussing Iraya beliefs and practices, but children comfortably share ideas when it comes to herbal medicine topics.

School facilities were also a problem identified by the four teachers in terms of inadequate chairs and books. Additionally, in terms of language that they use as a medium of instruction during their teaching process is Tagalog. Accordingly, Bawagan (2008) notably documented that the even male Iraya teacher utilizes Tagalog as his medium of instruction because he does not know how to speak the Iraya language. If teachers of Iraya children utilize Tagalog as a medium of instruction in serving their fellows, preserving their culture in the form

of language could be jeopardized. Additionally, the interview conducted by the researchers on February 25, 2019 to the Iraya tribe in Occidental Mindoro confirmed that young Iraya's are taught by their teachers using the Tagalog language. When their Mayor and other elders were asked if the Iraya language is still being used, they stressed that among the elders of the tribe, they converse using the Iraya language. Furthermore, Iraya elders are also fluent in speaking Tagalog due to their frequent dialogue with the lowlanders. However, young Irayas are already exposed to Tagalog language and according to their parents, they can still speak Iraya but they are more used to speaking Tagalog because their teachers usually speak the language. Going back to the main point, if education is the key to eliminate exploitation, abuse, and discriminatory image given to the indigenous peoples, it could also be a way to eliminate their cultures and traditions gradually. In the ethnolinguistic view, the current status of educating the Iraya people or other Indigenous Peoples implies that education could be the reason for erasing or making the language of Iraya people to become extinct in due time. There is a need to reconsider how modern teachers should teach the indigenous peoples because educating them for their advantage could also mean that their culture, traditions, and values will be forgotten.

## 5. Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework

Based on the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, section 3, Indigenous People (IP) or Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC) are "a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, tradition, and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and culture, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains."

According to the educational development and recognizing the rights of the indigenous people to receive basic education, the Department of Education developed a memorandum to wit: DepEd Order No.62, s. 2011 entitled Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework, DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2013 entitled Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 10533 Otherwise Known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, DO 32, S. 2015 – Adopting the Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework and DO 22, S. 2016 – Implementing Guidelines on the Allocation and Utilization of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program Support Fund for FY 2016.

IPEd Program is a "program that supports education initiatives undertaken through formal, non-formal, and informal modalities with emphasis on any of, but not limited to, the key areas of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices and community history, indigenous languages, Indigenous Learning System (ILS) and community lifecycle-based curriculum and assessment, educational goals, aspirations and competencies specific to the Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC), engagement of elders and other community members in the teaching-learning process, assessment, and management of the initiative, recognition and continuing practice of the community's ILS, and the rights and responsibilities of ICCs" (Villanueva, 2013).

The major objectives of the program are to develop the curriculum specific to the IP learners and develop a culture-based education for specific IPs. The IPEd program follows the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum but has additional standards and principles of the following: inclusive, culture-sensitive, and flexible enough to enable and allow schools to localize, indigenize, and enhance based on the community's educational and social context. DepEd values indigenous languages in the implementation of a Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) among indigenous learners to regenerate and enrich the community's Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) and Indigenous Learning Systems (ILS). The curriculum is designed to enable indigenous learners to be future culture-bearers, capable of exercising their right to self-determination as they interact with other cultures.

Iraya Minority schools in the remote areas were specially built to the indigenous people living near the mountain area of Mindoro. Minority schools such as Karyandangan Elementary School build in Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro caters the basic education (pre-school to elementary) to the community. To the extent that it became an evacuation center when typhoons or disaster happens. Before IPEd, the teachers are facing



challenges in teaching basic education to the Iraya Mangyan due to the differences in culture. The Iraya teacher on the study of Bagawan (2008) stated that he/she was willing to integrate the Iraya culture into the basic education of the students, but he/she needs to ask permission to his/her Tagalog supervisor before.

Currently, even though the minority school aims serve its best with the IPEd curriculum, the number of students attending is not stable, due to the necessity of the students to help their family to work or farm. This is also a challenge written on the study of Bawagan, (2008) where the Iraya Mangyan students were described as timid than Tagalog students and the tardiness or absenteeism of the Iraya Mangyan students. The common response of the parents when the teachers ask for an explanation is that the students help to work in the farm especially during planting and harvesting season.

## 6. Modernization of the Iraya Mangyan Language

The Iraya language is spoken in Northwest Mindoro by over ten thousand people. It has several known dialects, such as Abra-De-Ilog, Alag-Bako, Pagbahan, Palauan-Calavite, Pambuhan, and Santa Cruz (Tweddell, 1958). In the interview conducted by the researchers, Iraya Mangyan is either bilingual or monolingual based on the Filipino dialect. Bilingual is employing what they know on speaking Tagalog and their native tongue (Iraya) or monolingual, the use of Tagalog only. Iraya who lives in Oriental Mindoro are mostly monolingual while the indigenous people in the mountain areas of Occidental Mindoro are bilingual.

Modernization of Iraya Language was due to the adoption of the Iraya to the livelihood. When the researcher asks the Iraya children, they either speak in Iraya when they are talking to their elderly and speak in Tagalog when they speak to visitors or within their age group. The researcher interviewed one Taubuid pastor living in Iraya community:

"Tagalog ang gamit naming kapag nakikipagusap sa ibang mangyan"  
*(We used Tagalog when we talk to other Mangyan)* - Pastor Dante.

Also, the Chieftain of the Iraya community in Mamburao explained the teaching of the languages:  
 "Natuturo sa eskwelahan ay Tagalog, ang salitang Iraya ay natutunan sa magulang".  
*(What is being taught in school is Tagalog, while Iraya language are being taught by parents.)*— Mayor Romeo

The researchers also asked other Iraya Mangyan regarding the ethnolinguistic capability of the Iraya children:

Q: Ang mga bata po ba marunong pa mag iraya?  
*(Are the children adept in speaking Iraya?)*

A: "ay hindi na, tagalog ang tinuturo sa school"  
*(Not anymore, Tagalog language is being taught in school.)*

Q: Kayo po may kaalaman pa?  
*(How about you sir, do you know how?)*

A: "mayroon pa, pero kaunti nalang, dahil sa nakakasama naming, mas nagagamit na ang tagalog"  
*(Yes, a little. It is due to the people we used to mingle with, we used the Tagalog.)*

With the concern regarding the number of attendees if Iraya students in school, the researchers asked the parents of the Iraya children in relation to sending their children to school. Their responses were:

"Pagtanim, yun ang naisip ko pang suporta sa pagaaral ng mga bata, para hindi na po sya maghihirap, hindi kagaya ko"  
*(Planting, that is what I think can support the schooling of the children so that they will not be exposed to poverty just like me)* – Pastor Dante

"Hindi namin maisulat (hindi kami makapagsulat) dahil hindi kami nagkapagalar, kaya pinipilit naming pagaralin ang mga anak namin, para hindi magaya sa amin"  
*(We can't write due to the reason that we did not have schooling and that is why we forced our children to study so that they will not end like the way we grow.)*  
 – Mayor Romeo

The researchers were impressed with the willingness of the parents of the Iraya children to continue their education. The researcher asked one of the the parents if they want their children to live with them in the tribe after their child graduated. Their response was:

"Hindi, ayaw kong danasin ng anaking anak ung naranasan ko"  
 (No, I don't want my children experience what I had experienced.)  
 – Pastor Dante

Based on the retrieved information from Ethnic Groups Philippines (2019), even though the numbers of Iraya Mangyan speakers are still stable at the present, certain alarming advances could risk the ethnolinguistic of Iraya Mangyan. In some areas of Baclayán in Oriental Mindoro, youths can majorly speak Tagalog and a little bit of Iraya Mangyan language. Similar to the conducted interviews in Mambuaro, Occidental Mindoro, where the youths can more understand the Tagalog language, they can recognize and understand the Iraya Mangyan language, but majorly forget how to speak some of Iraya Mangyan language.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The research focused on the following: 1) Iraya Mangyan language. 2) Iraya Mangyan language education before. 3) Iraya Mangyan language education at the present. 4) Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) curriculum framework. 5) modernization of the Iraya Mangyan language. With the number of information gathered, the following conclusions were withdrawn:

- a. Iraya Mangyan language is scattered in Mindoro. Iraya at the present is bilingual or monolingual. The youths learn more Tagalog languages in schools while they learn Iraya Mangyan language (mother tongue) from their elderly. Iraya Mangyan speaks their mother tongue when they talk to their people while they speak Tagalog to communicate with the other Mangyan groups and visitors.
- b. The Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) curriculum framework helps the teachers in Iraya Mangyan minority schools to imply more culturally basic education to the Iraya Mangyan students but still cannot control the unstable number of students attending their classes.
- c. The mortality effect of modernization to ethnolinguistic of Iraya-Mangyan is possible. From the year cited in 1991, there were 10,000 speakers of Iraya Mangyan (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2019). The number of speakers before and at the present is decreasing, due to the few Iraya who shows interest in preserving their language and perhaps the perception of no longer useful communication language.

## 8. RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the discussions, interviews, and current findings on the status of Iraya Mangyan language in the Philippines, the following are hereby recommended for the preservation of Iraya language:

- a. The Department of Education could initiate reformation of education in teaching the indigenous peoples by integrating or emphasizing culturally relevant curriculum.
- b. Teachers who might be assigned in school to teach Iraya Mangyan people should be adept and well-versed in using Iraya language as the medium of instruction. Indigenous people who graduated or possessed a college degree could and should be encouraged to report back and teach to their tribe for they know much better about their culture preservation.
- c. The Department of Education could also integrate the curriculum of low-landers how indigenous peoples should be understood and treated to avoid discrimination and stereotyping of their culture especially their language. Rightful authorities could have a more significant dialogue with the elder Iraya Mangyan people to encourage them to teach the young generations of their language to avoid extinction.

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