

PREDICTING THE SURVIVAL OF THE BATAK, AN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE IN PALAWAN, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to examine the ethnolinguistic vitality of three Batak communities in Palawan and predict whether language maintenance or shift will prevail, drawing on various studies. The study employed three research tools: (1) observation of in-group's language behavior; (2) guided interviews for the following questionnaires: (a) Personal Profile and Reported Language Ability Questionnaire, (b) Questionnaire on Reported Language Use and Language Attitude, (c) Questionnaire on Interpersonal Network of Linguistic Contacts (INLC), and (d) Beliefs in Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (BEVQ); and (3) Lexical Ability Test, Sentence Translation Test and Actual Language Proficiency Test. Despite the high rate of migration and intermarriage in Riyandakan and Mangapin, all three Batak communities studies demonstrated positive language attitude and very high ethnic identity, reported high Batak language ability which correlated with actual language proficiency, reported more domains of language use and exhibited medium to strong beliefs in ethnolinguistic vitality. Structural analysis of data from the objective language test revealed replacements of Batak lexicon by Tagbanua and Cuyonon counterparts. However, examination of sentence translation data for grammatical morphemes revealed a relatively intact set of Batak grammatical morphemes. Findings in the present study have established the following variables– (1) age, (2) actual language proficiency, (3) language attitude, (4) ethnic identity and interpersonal network of linguistic contacts as predictors of language use. Overall, the speakers in all three areas have generally demonstrated in varying degrees, additive bilingualism/multilingualism in that the learning of Tagalog, Tagbanua, and Cuyonon did not entail the loss of the Batak language. While Tagalog is indisputably dominant in the domains of school, church, politics, media and public interactions, and while Tagbanua and Cuyonon have shown influence in Batak language, none of these three languages is embraced as a Batak identity marker, hence the Batak language continually occupies the domains of home, neighborhood and work in all three areas.

Keywords: sociological factors, ethnolinguistic vitality, ethnic identity, language attitude, language loss

1. INTRODUCTION

Palawan, the fifth largest island in the country, is home to a few of the Philippines' endangered languages. One of these is the Batak, one of the 32 Negrito languages listed in Headland's (2003, p.9) article and identified as endangered. Eder (1993), an American anthropologist who studied the Batak community for fifteen years, concluded that the Batak is a "disappearing tribe." Eder's personal census identified 272 with two Batak parents and 374 with one Batak parent (1987, p. 110). Novellino's (2005) provisional census found only 155 individuals with two Batak parents, indicating a 57% decline in the Batak core population within 33 years from the time Eder conducted his census. As of 2000, the Batak population, according to the City Planning Office (City of Puerto Princesa) was 293, with 149 males and 144 females. A more recent figure based on the 2010 census is 416 Batak, but this figure includes the children of mixed marriages between a Batak and another ethnic group.

It was nineteen years ago when Krauss (1992) predicted that only 600 languages of the 6,809 languages in the world will survive in the next century. With only 10% of these languages spoken by 90% of the world's population, it is highly likely that 90% of the languages which are minority languages will die by 2100, according to Romaine (1989). Krauss (1992, p.6), one of the most cited linguists of the world, made a four-way classification of language vitality: (1) Extinct languages are those that are no longer spoken; (2) Moribund languages are those that are no longer being learned by children as a mother-tongue; (3) Safe languages are those that will continue to be spoken into the indefinite future due to large numbers of speakers and/or official state support; and (4) Endangered languages are those languages which do not fall under the other three categories and "will—if the present conditions continue—cease to be learned by children during the coming century."

The present study however, adopted Whaley's (2003) reclassification of two of Krauss' (1992) categories. The first is a subdivision of the category *Moribund languages*, i.e., those which are not being learned by children as a mother tongue versus nearly extinct languages, which are those that lack a speech community. That is, they are not being used by anyone on a regular basis. With the first subcategory, Whaley believes that the language could conceivably survive if there were a substantial shift in attitudes about the desirability of transmitting the language to children. With the second subcategory, the nearly extinct languages however, Whaley maintains that long-term survival is almost inconceivable.

Giles, Bourhis and Rosenthal (1977, p.308) define ethnolinguistic vitality as "...that which makes a [linguistic] group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations..." They assert that "[e]thnolinguistic minorities that have little or no group vitality...eventually cease to exist as distinctive groups." On the contrary, when a group's distinctive identity flourishes, it will have higher ethnolinguistic vitality, and its members will be more likely to maintain their competence in the use of their ethnic language.

Factors determining ethnolinguistic vitality can be classified into three kinds: (1) sociological factors, (2) socio-psychological factors, and (3) psychological factors. Although some dominant factors affecting language vitality in a speech community have been highlighted in previous studies, the interaction of these three groups of factors has been recognized.

The present study aimed to examine the ethnolinguistic vitality of three Batak communities and predict whether language maintenance or shift will prevail. Specifically, this research purported to answer the following questions:

1. What sociological factors influence the language behavior of individuals, in Sitio Riyandakan, Sitio Kalakuan, and Sitio Mangapin in terms of the following:
 - a. Demographic factors
 - b. Political factors
 - c. Economic factors
 - d. Cultural factors
2. Which among the following variables correlate/s and is/are predictors of language attitude, language use and actual language proficiency?
 - a. age
 - b. sex
 - c. birthplace
 - d. occupation
 - e. educational attainment
 - f. first language
 - g. interpersonal network of linguistic contacts (INLC)
 - h. beliefs in ethnolinguistic vitality
 - i. ethnic identity
 - j. language attitude and language use
 - h. reported language proficiency
 - i. actual language proficiency
3. What is the nature and direction of language change in selected lexical and grammatical morphemes?

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986), Giles, Bourhis and Taylor's (1977) theory of ethnolinguistic vitality and Landry's and Allard (1987) macroscopic model of bilingualism. Giles, et al. originally viewed their Ethnolinguistic Vitality concept as a theoretical framework for analyzing the sociological factors influencing intergroup relations among different ethnolinguistic groups within a contact situation. One prominent model that broadly covers the three dimensions of bilingual/multilingual development in analyzing a language situation is the ethnolinguistic vitality model. The model below illustrates the sociological factors defining the objective ethnolinguistic vitality.

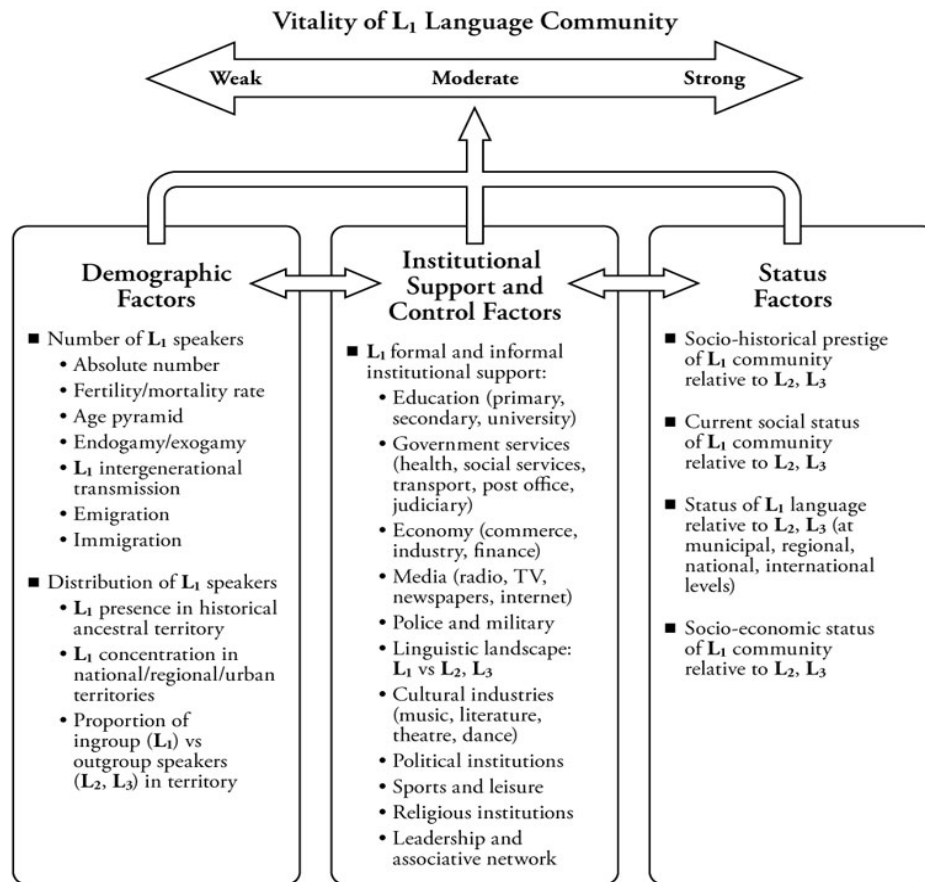


Figure 1. Taxonomy of sociological factors affecting the vitality of language community L1 in contact with language communities L2 and L3. (Adapted from Bourhis, 2001)

The objective language vitality model consists of three major components, namely, (1) the demographic variables, (2) institutional support and (3) social status. The first component of ethnolinguistic vitality – the demographic variables are those related to the absolute number of members composing the language group and their distribution throughout the urban, rural or regional territory. The number factors are usually determined by the following linguistic indicators: (a) L1 as the mother tongue of community speakers, (b) knowledge of the first (L1) or second (L2) language, and (c) L1 and/or L2 language use in private settings such as the home and with friends. Number factors refer to the language community's absolute group numbers, its birth rate, mortality rate, age pyramid, endogamy/ exogamy, and its pattern of immigration into and emigration out of their ancestral territory. Distribution factors refer to the numeric concentration of speakers in various parts of the territory, their proportion relative to outgroup speakers, and whether or not the language community still occupies its ancestral territory. Taken together, the demographic indicators can be used to monitor demolinguistic trends, such as language maintenance, language shift, language loss, and intergenerational transmission of the L1 mother tongue.

The second component of the framework institutional support is defined as the degree of control a group has over its own fate relative to co-existing linguistic outgroups (Sachdev & Bourhis 2001, 2005). Institutional control is the dimension of vitality needed by language groups to maintain and assert their presence within state and private institutions, such as education, the mass media, local government, health care, the judicial system, commerce and business. Institutional support is related to the concept of "institutional completeness" originally developed by Breton (1964, 2005).

The third major component refers to the social status variables which are related to a language community's socio-cultural status within the state (e.g. funding agencies), its current status as a dynamic, culturally and economically vibrant community, and the prestige of the language and culture locally, nationally and internationally. The higher the status ascribed to a language community, the more vitality it is likely to possess (Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal 1981).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

The respondents consisted of 121 Batak speakers. Of the 120 estimated population in Kalakuan, 74 became respondents, constituting 62 percent of the population. Riyandakan, on the other hand, has an estimated population of only 49. The 25 respondents therefore constitute 51 percent of the total inhabitants. Mangapin has 50 respondents constituting 67 percent of the estimated 75-member population in the community. For better results, all the speakers present during the visits were interviewed and observed.

The participants were classified into four age groups based on people's common perceptions of age, namely, (1) "children" composed of 17 years old and below, (2) "young adults" as between 18 and 30, (3) "middle aged" as from 31 to 50 and (4) "old" as over 50 years old. These groupings along with male/female division, education, occupation and L1 and L2 were the primary social variables considered in the samples. Aside from the researcher, two research assistants who were personally trained by the researcher assisted in the gathering of data. Observation of the Batak inhabitants' actual language use and informal interviews were deemed significant in determining the objective vitality of Batak language.

2.2 The Research Areas

Sitio Kalakuan in Barangay Tanabag is home to 31 Batak households, most of whom have two Batak parents. This Batak community is five to six kilometers away from the national highway and is at least one and a half-hours walk from the highway. One has to make ten river crossings to reach the Batak settlement although during summer, it is accessible through shuttle buses. Kalakuan River with its deep and clean waters is a favorite tourist destination for foreigners. The researcher observed that Batak is the language of the home and neighborhood, and children use Batak with peers in conversations and at play. The researcher surveyed the Batak who were around when she visited the area and found that at least six adults have one Tagbanua parent.

Sitio Riyandakan is approximately 6.5 kilometers from Barangay Maoyon proper, and one has to make twenty river crossings to reach Riyandakan. It was noted that all the thirteen families consist of a Batak and partner from another ethnic group, most of whom are Tagbanua.

Sitio Mangapin in Barangay Langogan can be reached by taking a motorcycle from the national highway to Sitio Macandring. Sitio Macandring is nine kilometers away from the Langogan proper. From Macandring, one has to make a five-kilometer walk with four river crossings to reach Mangapin. This Batak community has around twenty households, but according to the local leader and elders of the community, there are only twenty adult Batak, fourteen of whom are married. Of these fourteen, twelve are married to a spouse from another ethnic group.

2.3 Research Instruments

The study employed four research tools: (1) observations of ingroup's language behavior; (2) guided interviews for the following questionnaires: (a) respondents' reported language use and language ability, (c) Allard and Landry's (1992) Interpersonal Network of Linguistic Contacts (INLC), (d) the Beliefs in Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (BEVQ), and (3) language tests such as the lexical ability and sentence translation test adapted from Kobari (2009) and the actual language proficiency test adapted from Quakenbush (1989) to analyze possible lexical and morphological changes in the speakers' language. Because of space constraints, only the findings from observations of ingroup's language behavior and the results of language tests will be included in this article.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Sociological factors affecting ethnolinguistic vitality

The Batak of all three localities are highly multilingual. Most adults met by the researcher have an impressive command not only of Batak but also of Tagalog and an active or passive skill in either Tagbanua or Cuyonon. Children and adults in the three areas generally use Batak in more domains of communication in the community. Analysis of qualitative data derived from sociological factors in the three Batak communities points to some important facts about the objective vitality of Batak. Employing the three-fold classification of vitality, *high*, *medium* and *low*, the present study can appropriately describe Batak vitality in Kalakuasan to be *high*. Sociological factors which are not favorable for language maintenance were present such as small population, low birth rate, little institutional support, relatively weak social network, low group status and poor economic status. However, positive factors such as high concentration of speakers, high rate of endogamy, low migration rate, medium support from religious and charitable institutions, marginal access of the area during rainy days and more domains for Batak language use balance the effects of the negative factors. Taking Whaley's (2003) reclassification of Krauss's (1992) description of 'endangered languages', the Batak language is no doubt an endangered language, but not (yet) moribund.

Riyandakan and Mangapin can both be classified as having '*weak*' vitality at present since there are more sociological factors not favoring language maintenance. Demographic factors (small population and low birth rate for Riyandakan, high rate of migration and exogamy, relatively few domains for Batak language use, relatively weak social network and poor economic and social

status) and institutional support (very little support from local institutions) contribute to this weak vitality. Among the factors mentioned, it is the high rates of migration and exogamy that pose the greatest threats to language maintenance. The situation in Riyandakan and Mangapin is worsened by the destruction of their rivers which may result in relocation of the inhabitants in the future.

This section discusses the results of analysis of data from the lexical ability test and sentence translation test administered to the Batak respondents.

3.3.1 Lexical Ability Test

To determine the nature and direction of language change in the three Batak communities being studied, a twenty-four-item lexical test and twenty-item sentence translation test were given to available respondents in the three areas. The lexical test was given to determine the respondents' familiarity with Batak vocabulary while the sentence translation was given to elicit grammatical morphemes. To identify correct and incorrect answers for lexical items, responses were compared to linguistic items provided in the unpublished Batak-English Dictionary compiled in 1993 by Audrey Mayer and Rosemary Rodda of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Philippine Branch, and a Batak wordlist compiled by Warren (1959). Those items which are not identical to the unpublished baseline Batak linguistic data documented by Rodda, et. al., (1993) and Warren (1959) were considered incorrect. Likewise, respondents' answers in the sentence translation tests were compared and with the help of the baseline data, a few elder Batak and missionaries/pastors who had worked in Batak communities since the early 1990s assisted in identifying correct answers.

The answers were divided into four groups depending on the percentage of group's correct answers. The first group consists of words where the Batak exhibited perfect stability; the second group consists of words where at least two areas exhibited 100 percent accuracy; the third group consists of words where the group scored with 69% correctness but not higher than 95%; and the fourth group consists of words where the respondents from the three areas scored relatively low with a diversity of incorrect answers.

From a set of twenty-four items, two items exhibited perfect stability among the respondents in the three areas, and these are the "abaga" (shoulder blade) and "to run" (manlukbo). A second group of items consisting of five lexical items and one grammatical morpheme where the respondents exhibited nearly perfect stability are "lambong" (cloth), "bayuu" (turtle), "dakel" (many), "getyek"(small), "ugdaz" (worm), ya itu (this) and "bangkian"(to bite). For these items, it was noted that one respondent from Kalukuasan gave the word "sapno" instead of "lambong" for cloth and another gave the answer "matama" which is a Cuyonon term for *many*. A few speakers from the three areas answered "bakoko" which is a Cuyonon word for turtle, instead of "bayuu". Another respondent from Kalukuasan gave the word "padan" to mean small. It was found that "padan" must be "padaan", a Batak word that also means small. The third group is composed of six items, namely, "kadawaan" (flesh), "kayto" (here), "maglampud" (to come down), "muat den" (to go), "ya itu" (this) and "pirek" (eyelashes). For these items, it was noted that there was a tendency for respondents to give "seled" (inside of) to mean flesh which is wrong. It must have happened because "seled" in Filipino is "laman" and flesh is also "laman," which have entirely different meanings. "Kayto" is a term for "here" and is commonly replaced

by another Batak lexicon "ya itu" which means "this". "Muwat den" (go there) tends to be substituted by "muat sini" (come here), also a Batak lexicon and "magpanaw" (to go) which is a Cuyonon term. "Maglampud" means "will run" but a good number of Batak from Kalakuasan and a few speakers from Riyandakan and Mangapin tend to use "luwampud" which is a past tense of the word. "Ya itu (this) tends to be replaced by half of the interviewees in Mangapin as "ya iyan" (that). The word "pirek" tends to be substituted by "amemerek" and "tamemerek," which are Cuyonon terms for eyelashes. However, the respondents' group scores in the remaining nine words exhibited preference for Tagbanua and Cuyonon terms. Answers for "udum"/"panganod" (cloud) illustrates semantic confusion with semantically similar Batak items "kudlap"(lightning), "gabon"(fog), "abagat" (the southwest wind) and "langit" (sky, heavens). "Ibtang" (to put) is commonly replaced by a greater majority in all three areas by "ibutang" which is a Cuyonon/Visayan term. "Garawak" (to cry) is substituted by "magtangis", a Cuyonon term by 75 to 94 percent of the respondents in the three areas. "Talon" (forest) is commonly identified as "kagubaan" a Tagbanua term and there was occasional use of Tagalog counterparts "bukid", "kagubatan" and "kabukidan". "Adalem" (below) tends to be substituted by "seled" which is a result of semantic confusion and "adalen" by more than half of the respondents in Mangapin. "Adalen," however, does not exist in the baseline data for Batak lexicon nor is it identified as Cuyonon or Tagbanua. "Magkanta" (to sing) is replaced by its past form "kuwanta" by nearly half of the respondents in the three locations. The lexical form "muno" (how) occurred as "pauno" with more than ninety percent of the respondents in the three locations. The seeming juxtaposition of the two lexical items, "muno" and its Tagalog counterpart "paano", could be a product of contact with Tagalog speakers. "Palapalad" (palm) is often replaced by "raparapa" which is Agutaynen term for sole of the foot. "Rugud" which is an inclusive term to refer to *relatives* is substituted by "ilog", a Cuyonon lexicon to mean the same. Other semantically similar terms were used in place of "rugud" such as, "ari" (younger sibling), "amayan" (uncle), and "kamanaken" (niece or nephew) which are also part of the Batak lexicon.

Overall, the substitutions made in Cuyonon by few Batak speakers for the second and third group of words were too low in frequency to be considered a sign of linguistic diffusion or language shift. The seeming preference for Cuyonon terminologies is more evident in the fourth group of lexical items and is most pronounced among Batak respondents in Mangapin and Riyandakan. This phenomenon may be aptly considered as language assimilation, a by-product of language contact.

3.3.2 Sentence Translation Test

To further test the possibility of language shift, the respondents were asked to translate twenty sentences in Tagalog into Batak. Based on the responses given by informants in the three locations, only five items/five sentences were answered/translated by respondents in the three areas with at least fifty percent of accuracy. In addition, there were only two for which two locations obtained at least fifty percent accuracy-Kalakuasan and Riyandakan in both cases. The remaining ten items are those where not even one community scored higher than fifty percent. For instance, "Duateng ta na" is the right Batak translation of "Umuwi na tayo". However, "duateng" tends to be replaced by "Muli" which is a Tagbanua counterpart. Another trace of Tagbanua influence is the use of "wai" to mean water or river instead of the Batak counterpart "danum" or "sapa" and the use of "Mamuerto ako" to replace "Muat ako dun kat Puerto". More lexical borrowings are of Cuyonon origins. For instance, item number two, the sentence

supposedly in Batak is "Papai ka?". Papai ka is replaced by "Ari ka nagpanaw" where "ari" and "magpanaw" are both Cuyonon words. Some other lexical borrowings are "magalangen" instead of masunudon (item no 6); "mabawl" instead of "dakula (item no.7& 11); "ninuno" instead of gura-gurang or apu-apuan (item no 8); "makuri" or "pobre" instead of "malusud" (item no. 13); "maambeng" instead of "matinlo"; magmakuri" instead of "nagladu" (item no. 16); "nadekep" instead of "napisi" (item no. 20), "barkada" instead of "iba-iba" among others, are all Cuyonon words.

Another observation is that at least seventy-five percent of the respondents in the Kalakuan and Mangapin who were not able to answer some items in the test were children, (less than eighteen years old). The inability of the respondents in the three areas to translate fifty percent of the Tagalog sentences into Batak and the replacement of Batak lexicon by Tagbanua and Cuyonon counterparts is an indication that some Batak lexical items may be lost to the informants either because they never had them in the first place or they may have acquired them when they were young but owing to lack of use, such terms were just forgotten. The many instances of lexical borrowings from Cuyonon indicate that the Batak language is undergoing changes. There were also instances of semantic shift where a particular word in Batak is used to refer to another object. However such changes do not necessarily signal language attrition.

The present study presumed that when language change is taking place, the Batak language would become more intelligible to the outgroup, either to Tagbanua or Cuyonon speakers. A casual test of intelligibility was conducted where two Tagbanua speakers and two Cuyonon speakers who never had any exposure to the Batak language were asked on separate events to listen to the sentence translations in Batak and also to a few of recorded Batak utterances. Although the informants could guess possible meanings of sentences which contain at least one Tagbanua or Cuyonon lexical items, oftentimes they would make mistakes. The unintelligibility of most of the Batak sentences and the recorded utterances to Tagbanua and Cuyonon speakers demonstrates the enduring distinctiveness of the Batak language.

3.3.3 Grammatical Morphemes

To further test the possibility of language diffusion, a group of grammatical morphemes derived from the participants' responses to sentence translations were analyzed. Waren's (1959) Batak vocabulary and Mayer and Rodda's (1993), Batak-English Dictionary served as baseline data. The presence of grammatical features in the baseline data was the basis in determining whether the morphemes found in the sentence translation responses were accurate answers. In addition, the placement of the morphemes in the samples was compared to determine whether substitutions by counterparts in Tagalog, Tagbanua or Cuyonon, were taking place. Table 6.1 presents the grammatical morphemes in Batak with English equivalents.

Table 6.1. Grammatical Morphemes in Participants' Responses in Sentence-Translation Test

Grammatical Morpheme	Meaning in English	Percentage of Retention		
		Kalak	Riyan	Mang
1. ta	"you and I"/ ours	93%	77%	84%
2. na	"now", having become	100%	81%	84%
3. it	Actor, possessor	100%	100%	100%
4. kita	You and I, possessor	90%	84%	82%
5. kanya	He/she/it first class personal pronoun	100%	100%	100%
6. daa	"no more"	65%	63%	65%
7. kanimu	"To you", 3 rd class pronoun	100%	100%	100%
8. kat	"to" or "at"	100%	85%	95%
9. tu	Construction marker indicating that the ff word is the topic of utterance	54%, 46% use "tu" and "it" interchangeably	58%	55%
10. men	"we" exclusive	71%	65%	70%
11. ya	3 rd person personal and poss. Pronoun	33%, 31% (no answer), 10% ("mo"), 20% ("iya")	30%	45% , 24% (use "ya and "iya" interchangeably)
12. ay	"because"	87%, 13% did not produce the morpheme	70%	45%
13. gwa	Only	67%, 33%(did not produce the feature)	70%	66%
14. kanamen/amen	"to us" exclusive	80%, no answer (20%%)	70%	67%, 33%(no answer)

Legend: Kalak= Kalakuan Riyan= Riyandakan Mang=Mangapin

As shown in the table, only the morpheme "ya" showed linguistic diffusion. A few of the respondents tended to use "mo" which is a Tagalog counterpart of the word. "Iya" which cannot be found from the baseline data is also another feature used by the respondents. The data for the rest of the thirteen morphemes exhibited a high degree of retention among the respondents in the three locations. Overall, the structural analyses of the Batak language in the three communities seem to indicate relatively little language change. However, it would be premature to make a conclusive statement regarding the degree of change based on the limited set of items. Obviously, a longitudinal study that will include an in-depth analysis of lexical, morphophonemic, morphological, syntactic and semantic analyses of the language would be timely and appropriate.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study examined sociological factors influencing the behavior of individuals in Batak communities and examined their beliefs about ethnolinguistic vitality of their own language as well as two other languages (Tagbanua and Cuyunon) in their multilingual context. It attempted to determine which variables are predictors of language attitude, use and actual proficiency. It

also briefly explored the nature and direction of actual language change through tests of selected lexical and grammatical items. Overall, the outcomes of the multivariate statistical analyses are supportive of previous research in that the respondents' use of Batak language was predicted by actual language competence, linguistic contacts, ethnic identity and attitude associated with the Batak language.

The replacement of Batak lexicon by Tagbanua and Cuyonon counterparts is an indication of language change made possible by continued contacts of Batak speakers with speakers of those language groups and the syntactic similarities among their languages. The intact Batak grammatical morphemes, however, indicate that the rate of language change in the three locations is relatively slow. Moreover, lexical replacements may be due to speakers' "difficulty in retrieval rather than total loss" (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992, cited in Hulsen, 2000, p. 5). Considering the existence of high objective vitality, high subjective vitality, positive language attitude, high ethnic identity, relatively stable language structure and relatively healthy language use, it would be safe to conclude that the actual language vitality of Kalakuasan is high. Owing to these characteristics, the Batak language in Kalakuasan is predicted to exist for many years and decades to come. On the other hand, with medium/moderate objective vitality, relatively high subjective vitality, positive language attitude and high ethnic identity of speakers, relatively stable language structure and relatively healthy language use, the Batak language in Riyandakan is considered to have medium actual language vitality. The language may exist for many years if the low rate of population growth increases and the high rate of migration become controllable. Similarly, with medium/moderate objective vitality, moderate subjective vitality, positive language attitude and high ethnic identity of speakers, relatively stable language structure and relatively healthy language use, the Batak language in Mangapin is considered to have medium actual language vitality. Unless migration and intermarriage have become uncontrollable and intergenerational transmission becomes interrupted, language maintenance is expected to prevail in the area. Overall, the speakers in all three locations have generally demonstrated in varying degrees, additive bilingualism/multilingualism in that the learning of Tagalog, Tagbanua and Cuyonon did not entail the loss of the Batak language. While Tagalog is indisputably dominant, it is not embraced as a Batak identity marker. Hence, the Batak language continually occupies the domains of home, neighborhood and work in all three areas. The mismatch between the objective vitality of Batak in Riyandakan and Mangapin with the perceptions of their speakers about the ethnolinguistic vitality of their community is only one of the many indicators of the complexity of predicting language situation. The replacement of Batak lexicon by Tagbanua and Cuyonon counterparts is an indication of language change made possible by continued contacts of Batak speakers with speakers of those language groups and the syntactic similarities among their languages. The intact Batak grammatical morphemes however, are an indication that the rate of language change in the three locations is relatively slow.

The present research would like to stress that language change is a natural occurrence in a multilingual context and does not necessarily equate to language death. The case of the three Batak communities studied may be considered a classic case of contact-induced change, a reminder to linguists that language indeed does not occur in isolation. However, replacements of Batak lexical items should be taken seriously. The Batak speakers should be made aware of the language situation of their respective communities. For if this trend (lexical substitutions) continues, the Batak language may eventually be lost as it blends into one of its neighboring languages as Headland (2003) forecasts for a number of Agta languages.

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