



PROCEEDINGS 2026-37

Local Regional Studies Network

Translation Using Eastern Visayas Languages

Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan: The Promotion of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues in Academic and Public Discourse
Session 3

21 November 2025

Leyte Samar Heritage Center, UP Tacloban College



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
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*Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan: The Promotion of Eastern
Visayas Mother Tongues In Academic and Public Discourse
Session 2*

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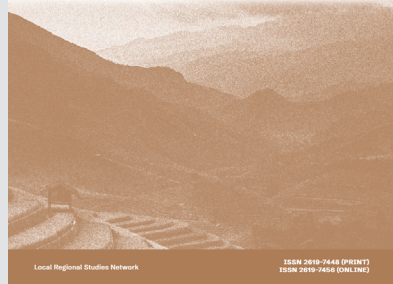


DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES 2026-29

Preserving Mayoyao Heritage

A Community-initiated Approach to Sustainable
Heritage-Tourism and LGU Cultural Policy
Development in Safeguarding Rice Terraces

Jo M. Jularbal, Ph.D. 



Local Regional Studies Network

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PROCEEDINGS

Learning Materials
Production Using Eastern
Visayas Local Languages

DISCUSSION PAPER

Preserving Mayoyao Heritage: A
Community-initiated Approach
to Sustainable Heritage-Tourism
and LGU Cultural Policy
Development in Safeguarding
Rice Terraces

About the Roundtable Discussion

The roundtable discussion (RTD) on “Translation Using Eastern Visayas Local Languages” was held on November 21, 2025 at the Leyte Samar Heritage Center, UP Tacloban College (UPTC). It was the third of the three-part series of RTDs of “*Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan: The Promotion of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues in Academic and Public Discourse.*” The event was formally opened with a warm welcome from Prof. Jessa A. Amarille, Chair of the Division of Humanities of UPTC.

The RTD consisted of two panels of discussants. The first panel, “Lost (or Found) in Translation,” featured Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon of Leyte Normal University (LNU), Prof. Gina A. Dean of Northwest Samar State University (NwSSU), and Dr. Maria Vanessa E. Gabunada of Visayas State University (VSU). They discussed the technical and operational side of translation using the local languages in Eastern Visayas. Meanwhile, the second panel, “Translation Across Cultures and Regions” was composed of Professor Emeritus Merlie M. Alunan of University of the Philippines, Ms. Firie Jill T. Ramos of KATIG Writers Network Inc., and Prof. Michael Carlo C. Villas of VSU. They shared their experiences in the practice of translation of literary texts into Waray.

Each panel discussion was followed by an open forum where participants engaged in conversations about the use of Eastern Visayas local languages in translation. The participants included faculty members and students from the BA Literature and BA Media Arts programs of UPTC, along with other interested stakeholders from outside the university.

By bringing together educators, language scholars, and other stakeholders, “*Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan*” aims to develop policy interventions that promotes, strengthens, and popularizes the use of Eastern Visayas languages in academic and public discourse.

PRESENTATIONS

Panel 1: Lost (or Found) in Translation

The first panel, “Lost (or Found) in Translation,” featured Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon, Prof. Gina A. Dean, and Dr. Maria Vanessa E. Gabunada who, respectively, discussed the technical side of translation, its use in academic and media contexts, and the translation projects in Cebuano.

Translating Waray: Grammatical Alignments and the Reversal of Roles

Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon

Professor

Leyte Normal University



Figure 3.1 Presentation by discussant Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon

To open his presentation, Dr. Oyzon introduced the concept of transitivity in English and Waray. He explained that in English, transitivity is determined by whether a verb takes an object, involving only two categories: transitive and intransitive. In contrast, Waray encodes not only “who does what to whom,” but also “how strongly” the action affects its participants. Thus, as Dr. Oyzon emphasized, transitivity in Waray is classified into multiple degrees such as intransitive, detransitive, transitive, and high-transitive, among others. From this, he highlighted the resulting structural incompatibilities that arise when translating between Waray and English.

He further illustrated his point through examples. In English, the subject in the intransitive sentence “She sleeps” is marked in the same way as the subject in the transitive sentence “She kissed her.” Regardless of whether the action affects another participant, the subject remains unchanged in both clauses. In contrast, Waray marks participants differently according to their role in the action. “She sleeps” is translated into Waray as “*Kumaturog hiya*,” while “She kissed her” becomes “*Ginbarukan hiya niya*.” In the former, “*hiya*” functions as the subject and marks the actor, whereas in the latter, “*hiya*” marks the affected participant and “*niya*” marks the actor. Dr. Oyzon emphasized that this illustrates how Waray does not treat the subject uniformly across clause types, unlike English.

Another example shared by Dr. Oyzon is “*Ginkaon ako han buaya*,” commonly translated into English as “I was eaten by the crocodile” or “The crocodile ate me.” In the original Waray sentence, “*ako*” (me) is foregrounded as the affected participant, while “*han buaya*” (by the crocodile) is marked as an oblique agent, reflecting a patient-centered framing of the event. When rendered in English, however, the sentence is reframed around the agent. In “The crocodile ate me,” the crocodile becomes the most prominent participant in the clause. Even the passive construction “I was eaten by the crocodile” does not fully preserve the original Waray perspective. Dr. Oyzon noted that this poses a problem because it results in structural mismatch, misrepresentation of agency, loss of ergative symmetry, and thematic consequences. Translating from Waray to English can unintentionally reassign agency, “demoting” or “promoting” participants in ways that do not reflect how the event is framed in the source language. He emphasized that such shifts may lead to mistranslation, which is concerning, particularly in contexts where accuracy of perspective and agency is crucial.

Goal	Option	Effect
Maintain transitivity	The crocodile ate me.	Grammatically faithful, but agent-focused.
Maintain patient focus	I was eaten by the crocodile.	Preserves focus, but reduces transitivity.
Maintain both	—?	Requires discourse-level compensation.

Table 3.1. The Translator’s Dilemma

Building on this discussion, Dr. Oyzon presented several translation strategies for rendering Waray into English using the example “Ginkaon ako han buaya.” One approach is grammatical transposition, which involves reassigning syntactic roles, as seen in the translation “The crocodile ate me.” Another strategy is perspective compensation, which aims to maintain focus and empathy, as in “I was eaten by the crocodile.” While this preserves a patient-centered perspective, it does so through passive construction. A third approach is topicalization, which preserves discourse structure without passivization, resulting in a translation such as “It was me the crocodile ate,” although this may sound unnatural in English. Given these options, Dr. Oyzon emphasized that the better strategy is preserving transitivity while realigning topical focus through topicalization or broader discourse framing.

Waray	Literal Gloss	English Translation
Ginkaon ako han buaya.	“Eaten I by the crocodile.”	“The crocodile ate me.”

Table 3.2. Grammatical Transposition

Waray	Focus	English Equivalent
Ginkaon ako han buaya.	Patient-centered	“I was eaten by the crocodile.”

Table 3.3. Perspective Compensation

Waray	Literal gloss	English (Topicalized Active)
Ginkaoon ako han buaya.	"Eaten I by the crocodile."	"It was me the crocodile ate."

Table 3.4. Topicalization

Dr. Oyzon shared another translation example from the traditional Waray offering chant, "*Himulaw, himulaw manga kalag: ayaw kami pagsuli.*" Scott (1994, 121) translated it as "Eat, souls, eat: let it not be bad for us." Lietz (1960, 237) rendered it as "Eat, eat, our food, souls of the dead who are suffering and do not damage what we eat in order to harm us." Kobak and Gutierrez (2005, 287) offered a longer version: "Eat, eat, our food, you souls of the dead, you who are suffering, grant that what we are eating may not do us any harm!" Dr. Oyzon observed that in these translations, the original protective invocation becomes confrontational, and the plea becomes a command. Thus, he proposed an alternative translation: "(We) invoke, (we) invoke all the souls, do not hurt us."

In summary, Dr. Oyzon highlighted that failing to recognize these structural alignments can be risky because it may flatten the Waray distinctions of perspective and create epistemic difference. He stressed that translators must be conscious of what they sacrifice in the process. If one aims to remain faithful to the verb's transitivity and modality, certain aspects of focus may be lost. Conversely, if one prioritizes preserving focus, grammatical precision may be compromised. In short, no single English sentence can fully capture both the structure and perspective of the original Waray. Thus, Dr. Oyzon concluded his discussion by posing a thought-provoking question: "Whose language should govern meaning?"

The Promotion of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues in Academic and Public Discourse

Prof. Gina A. Dean

*Northwest Samar State University
Calbayog City, Samar*



Figure 3.2. Presentation by discussant Prof. Gina A. Dean

Prof. Dean discussed her use of the Waray language in translation in her work as a professor at NWSSU and as a journalist. She emphasized that Dr. Oyzon's discussion is particularly valuable for translators like her, given the lack of books or reference materials in Waray that focus on this area.

To ground her presentation, Prof. Dean highlighted the challenges brought by the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program in the primary school years in Eastern Visayas. These challenges include the lack of learning materials, insufficient teacher training and fluency, difficulties in translating concepts accurately, and the limited presence of the Waray language on the Internet. She explained that, in Calbayog, the materials provided were in the Tacloban variant of Waray. This required teachers to translate them into their own variant. However, many teachers had limited fluency in their local variant and lacked reference books to guide them in the process.

To address these challenges, Prof. Dean actively integrates Waray into her Development Communication (DevCom) classes. Acknowledging the limited availability of Waray materials and its scarce online presence, she encourages her students to use social media as a platform to share video documentaries, news reports, and infomercials produced in Waray. Additionally, she guides them in translating and localizing content within their major course outputs to reinforce the practical use of the language. They draw on their own communicative experiences to guide their writing, and also seek guidance from local elders, priests, and writers who are more proficient in the language.

Prof. Dean also shared that, as a journalist, she translates her interview questions into Waray. She considers this approach crucial for effective communication at the grassroots level because it allows her to engage more meaningfully with the people she interviews. Using the local language ensures that her questions can be clearly understood, helps build rapport and trust, and enables more authentic responses.

To conclude her presentation, Prof. Dean highlighted the importance of using the local language in both academic and media settings. First, it helps students learn more effectively because it makes it easier for them to understand and retain knowledge. Second, it strengthens their connection to their culture. Language and culture are closely linked, so incorporating Waray into academic work helps students appreciate their heritage. Third, it increases the visibility of Waray and reaches more people. Since the language is rarely used online, on radio, or on TV, using it in broadcasts and other media promotes its use and keeps it relevant. As a result, audiences can connect more deeply with the content, leaving a stronger impact.

Publication Cycle of Cebuano Literature Translation Projects (CLTPs)

Dr. Maria Vanessa E. Gabunada

*Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Visayas State University*



Figure 3.3. Presentation by discussant Dr. Maria Vanessa E. Gabunada

Dr. Gabunada's presentation focused on how translation projects in Cebuano literature came into being. She first discussed the rise of vernacular literature, during which translation initiatives emerged across the region. According to her, this movement gained momentum in the 1960s to 1970s, which aimed to retrieve and recuperate literary works written in Philippine languages other than Filipino and English. As a result, regional literary canons gained greater attention, re-emerged in public discourse, and became the basis for selecting works to be included in translation projects. Dr. Gabunada emphasized that this development was significant because Philippine literature had previously been largely understood as consisting only of works written in English and Filipino.

Some notable translation projects in Cebuano literature include the Solidarity Translation Series, funded by the Toyota Foundation of Japan, which features

literary works by several Cebuano writers. More recent initiatives include translation projects supported by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), focusing on selected literary works by Cebuano authors.

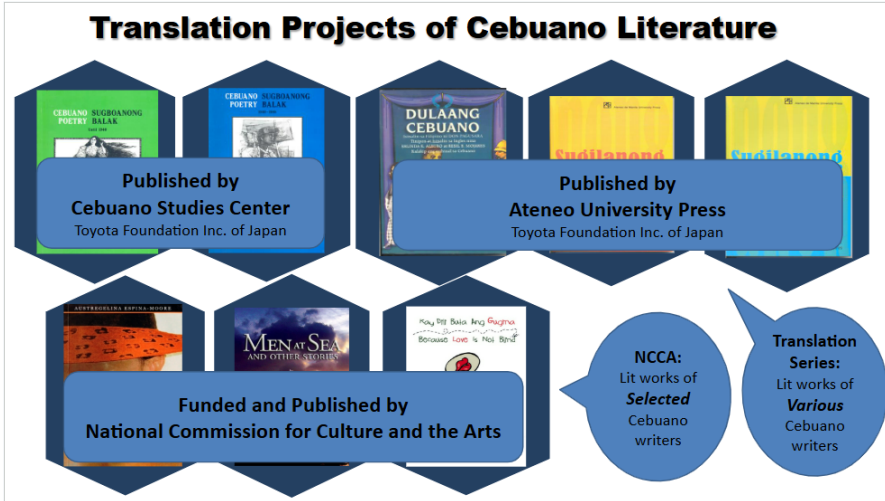


Figure 3.4. Translation Projects of Cebuano Literature

Moreover, Dr. Gabunada noted that three translation anthologies of Cebuano literature were produced in the 1970s. One was translated into Filipino, *Manunulat: Mga Piling Akdang Pilipino* by Efren Abueg, while two were translated into English under the Cebuano Studies Center Translation Projects led by Erlinda Alburo. In the 1980s, translation efforts expanded further with the publication of one journal and two anthologies. One Filipino translation consisted of eight selected poems published in *Mithi*, while the two English anthologies were released under the Solidarity Translation Series. In the 1990s, three additional anthologies were produced, all translated into Filipino. Two were published under the *Panitikan* Series, and one under the *Aklat Bahandi* Series. In the 21st century, translation projects increased significantly, with a total of twelve anthologies produced. One was translated into Filipino under the *Sentro ng Wika* Translation Project, while eleven were translated into English through the Cebuano Studies Center Translation Project, the Solidarity Translation Series, NCCA and University of San Carlos (USC). From these findings, Dr. Gabunada pointed out a clear preference in target languages, with translation projects more frequently produced in English than in Filipino.

Cebuano Literature Translation in 1970s			
Language Choice	Main Outlets	Translation Programs/Projects	Coverage
Filipino	1 anthology	<i>Manunulat: Mga Piling Akdang Pilipino</i> by Efren Abueg.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maikling kwento (Short Story) • Ambrosio T. Suico (Cebuano Fictionist) • Nasazion Bas (Cebuano writer) • Kasaysayan ng literaturang Sebuano (Nasazion Bas) mula • 1900s to 1960s.
English	2 anthologies	Cebuano Studies Center Translation Projects by Erlinda Alburo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folktales and Folksongs • No mention of authors • Precolonial

Table 3.5. Cebuano Literature Translations in 1980s

Cebuano Literature Translations in 1980s			
Language Choice	Main Outlets	Translation Programs/Projects	Coverage
Filipino	1 Journal	Published selected eight (8) translated poems in <i>Mithi</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cebuano Poems • Various canonical Cebuano poets • 1900s-1960s
English	2 anthologies	Solidarity Translation Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthology of translated Oral Traditions and Poems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cebuano Poetry • Various canonical Cebuano poets • Precolonial to 1940 • 1940-1988

Table 3.6. Cebuano Literature Translations in 1980s

Cebuano Literature Translations in 1990s			
Language Choice	Main Outlets	Translation Programs/Projects	Coverage
Filipino	3 anthologies	(2) Panitikan Series 1. Anthology of translated poems 2. Anthology of translated Play/Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral traditions and Cebuano Poems • Various Cebuano Poets • Precolonial to 1980s • Play/Drama • Selected Cebuano Playwrights (Ismael Paras; Junne Cañizares; Buenaventura Rodriguez; Vicente Sotto) • 1900s to 1960s
		(1) Aklat Bahandi Series 1. Anthology of translated short stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maikling kwento (short stories) • Vicente Sotto • 1900s to 1940s
English	NONE	NONE	NONE

Table 3.7. Cebuano Literature Translations in 1990s

Cebuano Literature Translation in the 21 st Century			
Language Choice	Main Outlets	Translation Programs/Projects	Coverage
Filipino	1 anthology	Sentro ng Wika Translation Project • Anthology of translated Oral Traditions, Poems, Stories, and Radio Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various genres (Bugtong, idyoma, salawikain, anak-dota, tula, kwento, at dulang panradyo) • Various Cebuano contemporary writers • original date of publication was not given
English	11 anthologies	(1) CSC Translation Project • Anthology of translated Oral Traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riddles and Proverbs • No mention • Precolonial
		(2) Solidarity Translation Series • Anthology of translated Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiction • Various Canonical Cebuano fictionists • Precolonial to 1940 • 1940 to 2005

Table 3.8. Cebuano literature translation in the 21st century

English	11 anthologies	(4) NCCA Publication with translation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthology of translated Novel and Fiction of selected classic Cebuano writers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Novel (Serialized fiction) of Austregelina Espina-Moore from 1970s to 1990s 2. Short Stories of Gremer Chan Reyes in the 1960s 3. Short Stories of Temistokles M. Adlawan from 1960s to 1980s 4. Novel (Serialized fiction) of Austregelina Espina-Moore from 1970s to 1990s
		(4) USC Publication with translation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthology of translated Novel and Fiction of selected classic Cebuano writers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Novel (Serialized fiction) of Austregelina Espina-Moore from 1970s to 1990s 2. Short Stories of Ernesto 3. D. Lariosa in the 1990s 4. Short Stories of Gardeopatra Quijano from 1930s to 1940s 5. Short Stories of Lamberto G. Ceballos from 1990s to present

Table 3.9. Cebuano literature translation in the 21st century

Following this, Dr. Gabunada presented the framework she adapted from Norbert Bachleitner. She explained that she preferred Bachleitner’s communication model because it explicitly includes translators in the process, with the author and publisher positioned at the top. These two, she noted, work together to materialize the project. However, this cycle is shaped by several factors located at the center of the model, such as intellectual influences and publicity, economic and social conjuncture, political and legal sanctions, and intellectual property regime. Using this framework, she shared that she developed a contextualized communication circuit for the CLTPs.

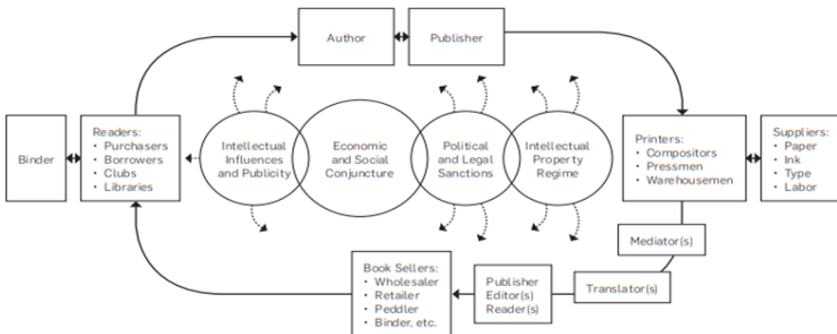


Figure 3.5. Norbert Bachleitner’s communications circuit

In the context of Cebuano literature, Dr. Gabunada explained that the rise of vernacular literature is the main influence, represented in the middle of the framework. Without this development, as well as funding from various agencies, the CLTPs would not have been possible. Translation also plays a central role in these initiatives, since it is a key requirement for publication. However, Dr. Gabunada noted a difficult reality that translators are often expected to translate works into English and Filipino to reach readers who do not understand regional languages.

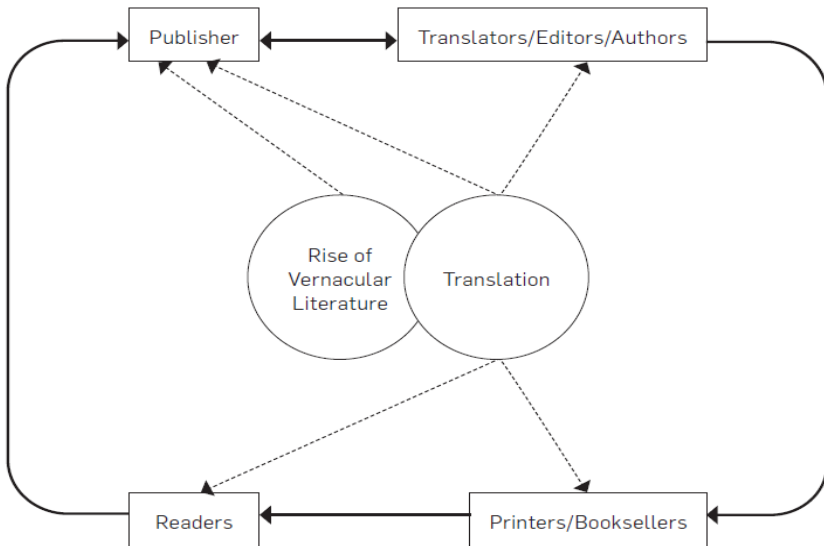


Figure 3.6. Contextualized communication circuit for analyzing Cebuano literature translation projects

She further explained that in this contextualized communication circuit, the publisher, rather than the author, holds the top position. Since the publisher provides the funding, major decisions throughout the project are largely determined by them. The translator then emerges as the next central agent, taking on a more active role than the author, who is silent in this cycle. This is because many of the translated works come from the Cebuano literary canon of the early 1900s to the 1930s, leaving authors unable to participate in the translation decisions.

Moreover, Dr. Gabunada pointed out that in the case of Cebuano literature, the roles of translator and editor often overlap. Translators typically edit their own work. From this point, she referred to Dr. Oyzon's earlier presentation, noting the tendency for translations to proceed without thorough evaluation. In such cases, the primary goal becomes publication and production, rather than assessing the accuracy or quality of the translation.

Following these are the printers and booksellers which, according to Dr. Gabunada, are limited in the context of Cebuano literature. These primarily include the NCCA, Cebuano Studies Center, Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), University of the Philippines (UP), De La Salle University (DLSU), and Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), along with only a small number of private publishers. Readers come after this stage, but they remain largely silent in the process. Dr. Gabunada explained that this is due to the limited readership of translation projects, especially when these works are not required for academic purposes. This remains a challenging reality for Cebuano literature translation initiatives.

Taking everything into account, Dr. Gabunada, following Pierre Bourdieu's contentions, contended that the field of cultural production is a "force field acting on all those who enter it, and acting in a differential manner according to the position they occupy there." In this field, one is either in a dominant or dominated position. According to her, regional literary publishing, especially translation projects, clearly occupies a dominated position because it lacks resources and visibility compared to literature in other languages. She illustrated this by reiterating the specific conditions in the CLTPS, which includes translating works into Filipino and English. She also added the power dynamics among the different constituencies involved, since most regional writers and translators rely heavily on funding from national agencies. At the same time, there is also unequal distribution of resources, since most publication support is concentrated in the metro. As a result, regional writers and translators often have no choice but to wait for calls for proposals and compete for the limited resources available.

In conclusion, Dr. Gabunada stressed that while the editorial policies of national publishers help Cebuano literature flourish through translation, they also limit the full development of original Cebuano works. Translating texts into English and Filipino encourages readership in these languages rather than in the original. On the positive side, however, the CLTPs have made Cebuano

literature widely accessible. According to Dr. Gabunada, translation serves as an “afterlife” for these works, contributing to the preservation, promotion, recognition, and continued survival of Cebuano literary texts.

Open Forum

Prof. Efmer E. Agustin, Faculty-in-Charge of the UPTC Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, facilitated the open forum for the first panel of discussants.

Prof. Merlie M. Alunan raised the first question, pointing out that translating works primarily into Filipino and English risks erasing regional languages in literature. She noted that textbooks in both the Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education programs do not include works in regional languages like Ilocano, Cebuano, or Waray, making these literatures seem nonexistent. She then asked Dr. Gabunada for her perspective, noting that if translation projects continue without opposition, regional literary traditions could face further marginalization.

Dr. Gabunada agreed with Prof. Alunan’s points. She expressed that the historical movement of Philippine literature in the 1930s and 1940s is quite ironic. At that time, literature was largely seen as being only in English and Filipino, which eventually led to calls for a revision of the definition of Philippine literature. This gave rise to vernacular literature, which aimed to include other regional languages in the formation of a national literature. But then, even though the movement sought to overcome the English-Filipino dichotomy, the conditions of translation projects continue to favor English and Filipino. Although this approach helps promote works in regional languages by publishing them alongside their translations, it also has consequences, such as readers eventually favoring the translated language over the original. Thus, according to her, while the intention of the projects is noble, there remains a clear preference for English and Filipino, which reflects the influence of the country’s language policies.

Given the impact of language policies, Dr. Gabunada emphasized that the MTB-MLE had the potential to significantly strengthen regional languages. However, the program has been discontinued, and even during its implementation, challenges were evident. Native speakers had varied realities. For instance, some private schools in regional areas use English as the primary medium of instruction, which only undermines the program’s goal of

promoting local languages. This situation presents the persistent challenge for local writers and translators to continue advocating for their languages.

Moving forward, the second question, read by Prof. Agustin from the questions submitted by online registrants, examined how translators decide which variant of a local language to use. It cited the case issues during the MTB-MLE implementation when teachers in places like Borongan received instructional materials written in Tacloban Waray.

In response, Dr. Oyzon explained that the choice of language or variant in translation often depends on which one the translator is most proficient in, which naturally becomes their “default” medium. A translator from Leyte may not have sufficient fluency in the Samar variant, just as a translator from Samar may not be fully proficient in the Leyte variant. From this standpoint, Dr. Oyzon encouraged everyone to write in their own language as a way to preserve them and potentially promote them at the national level.

Prof. Dean built on the discussion by offering another perspective of the situation. She recounted that when she pitched an environmental video documentary using a local language, she was asked to translate it into English or Filipino because the funding agency was based in Europe. This, she explained, shows how language choice in translation is often influenced not only by linguistic considerations, but also by funding requirements and audience reach. In her case, she used English to meet the funder’s expectations and make the work accessible to a wider audience.

Prof. Agustin agreed with Prof. Dean’s points and emphasized that economic considerations play a significant role in publication. To also address the question, he recalled the launch of Mr. Jerry Gracio’s translation of *The Little Prince*, where Mr. Gracio deliberately used “*ditoy*” (little) in *An Ditoy nga Prinsipe* instead of “*gutiay*” or other variants. As a native of Northern Samar, this was the term most natural to him. Prof. Agustin highlighted that this choice reinforces Dr. Oyzon’s earlier point that translators tend to work from the language variant they know best.

Prof. Alunan also contributed to the discussion by highlighting two general types of translation. The first is communicative translation, where conveying the exact meaning is most important, such as in editorials or recipes. The second is evocative translation, which applies to literary works. She emphasized that in translating creative works, the focus shifts from literal meaning to the

experience and emotions of both the reader and the translator. She further noted that the translator should use the language in which they are most proficient, as this allows them to convey the work most effectively.

Following this, Prof. Agustin read another question that connected to Prof. Alunan's point, asking how translators can ensure that a translated text captures the original worldview and essence, rather than focusing solely on its literal meaning.

Dr. Gabunada addressed the question by noting that, from her perspective, it is not entirely possible because translators inevitably rely on their own linguistic repertoire. She illustrated this with her analysis of English translations of a Cebuano poem by Vicente Ranudo. The first translation, by Resil Mojares, focused on aesthetic expression, reflecting his background as a poet. The second, by Semeon Dumdum, followed a more line-by-line approach, which Dr. Gabunada attributed to his training in the legal field. She then emphasized that, even though both translators are highly respected figures in Cebuano literature, their translations reflect their individual preferences and approaches.

Dr. Gabunada emphasized that the question raises issues about the validity of translations, which remains a persistent challenge in the field. Often, there is no external evaluation, and translators end up assessing their own work. Moreover, translators rely on different principles and theories, and each make decisions based on their individual expertise and preferences. For these reasons, Dr. Gabunada explained that the question is extremely difficult to answer, especially that there are still no established guidelines or rubrics to determine whether one translation is more correct than another.

However, Dr. Gabunada noted that, for the time being, these translation practices are acceptable because they are important initial steps toward the formal recognition of regional languages and the eventual development of standardized translation policies. She expressed hope that initiatives like the roundtable discussion series could contribute to the development of such policies in the future.

Prof. Agustin supported Dr. Gabunada's points and cited Prof. Alunan's approach in translating her own works, noting how each version differs from the others. He explained that this demonstrates how translation is influenced by the translator's personal choices and perspectives.

Moreover, Ms. Ramos shifted the roundtable to a new topic, praising Dr. Oyzon's presentation for being highly thought-provoking. On behalf of KATIG Writers Network Inc., she invited him to the 21st Lamiraw Creative Writing Workshop to provide a more in-depth discussion on translation. Following this, Prof. Alunan asked Dr. Oyzon how his deeper knowledge of language influenced his poetry, questioning whether it has been helpful or if it has introduced new challenges.

Dr. Oyzon admitted that he is currently more focused on scholarly research. He shared that he is deeply engaged with his discoveries and continues to explore further, leaving his creative work on the side for now. Consequently, he has not yet been able to determine how this deeper knowledge of language affects his poetry.

Furthermore, a student asked a question about her undergraduate thesis. She explained that she and her team were struggling to translate their interview protocol from English to Waray. Although their translation appeared clear to them, participants understood it differently during testing. She then asked the panel for references or guidance to help make their translations context-based and easily understood by their participants.

In response, Prof. Dean shared that when her students face similar challenges, she advises them to consult local elders, priests, and writers who have a stronger command of the language. Since reference materials for translation are scarce, her students often rely on these sources and make practical adjustments, sometimes using texts like the Bible as a guide.

Additionally, Ms. Ramos shared her experience with a commissioned translation of psychological first aid questionnaires from English to Waray. After the initial translation, the organization consulted Waray-speaking mental health professionals, who provided feedback and suggested revisions. This iterative process continued until both the translator and the organization were satisfied with the final version. She emphasized the importance of continuous consultation with informants, both to ensure that the questions are clearly understood and to accurately translate their responses during the later stages of the research.

Moving forward, Mr. Michael Rapada from the local government unit (LGU) of La Paz, Leyte, shared his reflections based on the discussions thus far. Specifically, he referred to Prof. Dean's presentation, where she shared

that she advises her students to consult local priests in their translation work. Building on this point, he raised a concern about the current practice in some churches in Eastern Visayas of celebrating Mass in English. He noted that most churchgoers are elderly and more familiar with the local language, which makes it harder for them to fully understand the message of the Mass. He also expressed concern that this trend introduces younger generations to using English even in cultural and religious practices, further distancing them from their local languages.

Moreover, Mr. Rapada shared that even when some churches conduct Mass in the local language, the Waray variant they use often differs from the one people actually speak. For example, the Leyte variant is sometimes used in parts of Northern Samar, making it difficult for attendees to grasp the message being conveyed. From this, he highlighted the importance of using the language that the audience can understand best, which is also crucial when selecting the appropriate variant for translation.

Prof. Dean acknowledged that while the issue is common in the region, there are priests who still advocate for the use of local languages. She expressed her gratitude that there are still people willing to assist her and her students with Waray translations. She added that she often goes the extra mile to help her students, especially when they need to repeatedly check their materials with informants. For example, she holds sit-down sessions with her students to guide them in translation and ensure their intended meaning is clear, making the process more efficient for them and their informants.

Panel 2: Translation Across Cultures and Regions

Translating Across Visayan Languages

Prof. Merlie M. Alunan

*Professor Emeritus
University of the Philippines*



Figure 3.7. Presentation by discussant Prof. Merlie M. Alunan

Prof. Alunan's presentation centered on her approach to translating creative works into different languages. She illustrated her process by reflecting on her experience translating Ester Tapia's Cebuano poem, *Gikan sa Germany Padulong sa Pilipinas—Mensabe sa Amigang Nag-inusara, Alang ni Joji*, into English as well as into Visayan languages, including Waray and Hiligaynon.

According to Prof. Alunan, her first step in translation is always to identify the speaker. This involves determining who can best convey the piece's theme, considering factors such as the speaker's gender, age, location, and psychological situation. She emphasized that the voice in the text should not be the translator's own, which makes translation particularly challenging. The translator must carefully select the persona that best fits the work in the target language. For example, Prof. Alunan explained that a barbecue vendor in Tacloban cannot simply be transposed into an American context. Instead, the translator must find an equivalent figure—someone who can speak English while remaining faithful to the meaning of the original text.

Furthermore, Prof. Alunan shared that she makes sure to avoid translating each word literally throughout the translation process. Specifically, for "*Alang ni Joji*, as with other creative works, she pointed out that an effective translation must capture the tone, rhythm, and overall essence of the text. According to her, it is important to always note that translating, especially literary works, goes beyond simply stating words, but about communicating the underlying idea and feeling to the reader. In her words, "You only have an emotion to share."

From her work on translating *Alang ni Joji*, Prof. Alunan emphasized that translation is not merely about transferring words from one language to another; it is also a means of fostering a deeper appreciation for the country's rich linguistic diversity. She pointed out that, much like how the roundtable discussion participants could grasp the poem's Hiligaynon version despite not speaking the language, Filipinos—despite their many languages and dialects—are bound by a shared understanding that connects them. With this, she underscored the importance of being willing to engage with and listen to other languages in order to bridge communication gaps and foster deeper connections.

Building on this, Prof. Alunan reflected on her experiences with English as the dominant language in education. She explained that this dominance often compels students who are native speakers of local languages to learn and use English, which makes their learning harder, causes them embarrassment, and even leads some to drop out of school. Prof. Alunan herself admitted that she was once among the teachers who pressured students to speak and write in English. Over time, however, she recognized the harm in this approach and changed her methods. After making this shift, she observed that her classes

became livelier and more meaningful because students were able to discuss ideas in the language, they felt most comfortable using.

Drawing from this experience, Prof. Alunan concluded her discussion by emphasizing the importance of programs like the Mother Tongue-Based-Multilingual Education. She expressed hope that teachers would no longer make the mistake of forcing students to “leave their language outside the classroom like a dirty pair of slippers.” Instead, she stressed, students should be encouraged to bring their language into the classroom and use it as a tool for learning.

Paghubad han nobela nga Remains

Ms. Firie Jill T. Ramos

President

KATIG Writers Network Inc.



Figure 3.8. Presentation by discussant Ms. Firie Jill T. Ramos

Ms. Ramos shared her approach to translating Daryll A. Delgado’s *Remains* into Waray. She began by explaining why she took on the project, emphasizing that these reasons are important considerations in her translation process.

Primarily, she accepted the project because the novel is rooted in the lived experiences of the people in Eastern Visayas, particularly in Tacloban. Built around stories set during the onslaught of Super Typhoon Yolanda, the work resonated strongly with local realities. Given that she has also personally experienced the typhoon and witnessed its aftermath, she found the story as something deeply familiar to her, which made it easier for her to connect with the novel's characters.

Alongside this, Ms. Ramos also noted that the project forms part of their ongoing efforts in KATIG to explore and expand the practice of translating texts into Waray. She explained that she accepted the project because she strongly believes in the importance of writing and translating as much as possible. Given the scarcity of materials in Waray, she views her work as a way of contributing to the growth and visibility of the language.

Moreover, Ms. Ramos emphasized that such work often falls to local writers themselves. With little to no publisher interest in funding Waray-language projects, they are usually responsible for editing, copyediting, publishing, and even marketing their own work. Thus, despite initial uncertainties, she stressed that there is no one else to take on this task but local writers like her.

Ms. Ramos has her own method of translating. She explained that she starts by reading the original text several times. For *Remains*, a relatively long work, she read it five times in full and then revisits each chapter carefully as she translates it. She then imagines the characters, particularly how they would sound when speaking in Waray. This allows her to identify the appropriate tone and voice for each character, such as how a cosmopolitan character or someone from a well-to-do family would express themselves. After this, she would carefully plan how to narrate the story in Waray to make sure that it reflects the natural speech of Waraynon speakers. Throughout the process, she follows a structured approach to ensure both cultural authenticity and literary quality.

Ms. Ramos shared that she anchors her work in frameworks such as cultural mediation, linguo-cultural analysis, pragmatic equivalence, and flexible strategy use. Through cultural mediation and negotiation, she works between the source and target language to retain cultural nuances, local flavor, and the author's original intent. This means identifying culture-specific terms and references, as well as finding a balance between staying true to the original text and making it understandable for the target readers. Moreover, through linguo-cultural analysis, she identifies and addresses culture-specific elements

such as idioms, metaphors, and historical references. In the case of *Remains*, she retained culturally grounded references such as Johnny Puso, events at the airport, and the looting that occurred after Typhoon Yolanda.

Additionally, Ms. Ramos draws on pragmatic and contextual equivalence by closely studying speech acts, tone, and style to retain the original voice and emotional resonance of the text. This process guides how she envisions the dialogue and narration in *Waray*. Alongside this, through flexible strategy use, she approaches translation with the reader in mind to ensure that the text remains meaningful for its intended audience. According to Ms. Ramos, her translation is currently awaiting feedback from the author. She will revise it based on the author's comments, and this process continues until they are both satisfied with the final version.

To conclude, Ms. Ramos cited Dr. Oyzon's presentation on transitivity, which helped put into words the approach she had been instinctively using to determine the most appropriate structure for her translation. As a native *Waray* speaker, she was able to make choices that ensured the language sounded authentic and fluid. However, she emphasized that discussions, like Dr. Oyzon's presentation, are essential for a more deliberate and thoughtful approach in translation.

(Un)making in *Paglaum: Mga Europeo nga Susumaton ha Waray*

Prof. Michael Carlo C. Villas

Professor

Visayas State University



Figure 3.9. Presentation by discussant Prof. Michael Carlo C. Villas

Prof. Villas explored the ideas of making and unmaking in translation, grounding his discussion in his experience in the translation project *Paglaum: Mga Europeo nga Susumaton ha Waray*. He began by explaining how the short stories were chosen, noting that the selection followed the guidelines set by the Czech Embassy, which funded the project. One requirement was that the stories be written in the language of the nation where the writer comes from. Another was that the author must have been deceased for at least 50 years prior to the project to avoid copyright concerns. Lastly, the selected stories needed to revolve around the theme of “*paglaum*” (hope), which is recognized as one of the theological virtues.



Figure 3.10. *Paglaum: Mga Europeo nga Susumaton ha Waray*

The making in *Paglaum* also involved careful selection of short stories based on representativeness. Prof. Villas and his team deliberately included both well- and lesser-known figures in world literature, such as James Joyce, Anton Chekhov, Bozena Nemcova, and Kalman Mikzath de Kisolto. Alongside these were works by Nobel laureates including Selma Lagerlof, Sigrid Undset, Thomas Mann, and Henryk Sienkiewicz. This balanced selection was intended to ensure that a wide range of European national literatures was meaningfully represented.

In terms of editorial decisions, Prof. Villas explained that the project deliberately used different variants of Waray. These included the variants from Northern Samar, represented by Rhodora A. Bande; Eastern Samar, through Aivee Badulid, Leonilo Lopido, and Kenneth Alvin Cinco; Western Samar, through Hermie Sanchez; and Eastern Leyte, through Jen Garcia, Firie Jill Ramos, Amado Arjhay Babon, Jetro Monares, and others. This allowed the translation to reflect the linguistic diversity within the Waray language.

Another editorial decision they had to make was to go against the “*tertium comparationis*” (ideal hypothetical variant). This concept describes an imagined, perfect version of the target language that a translator might try to achieve. Prof. Villas referenced Dr. Oyzon’s point that translators always face multiple possibilities and must make deliberate choices. Thus, in the making of *Paglaum*, the team believed that no single option could be considered definitively correct or ideal. Instead, they chose to reflect the real, lived variations of the Waray language across different regions.

The team also chose to use “*susumaton*” instead of “*istorya*” for translating “short stories.” They felt that “*susumaton*,” defined as “*...porma han istorya nga napasa ha aton pinaagi han pagyakan*” (a form of story passed down orally), more accurately conveys the meaning and nuance of the original term. Alongside this, the team made it a point to follow specific orthographic rules. They uniformly spelled commonly used words, such as “*Diyos*” instead of the variants “*Dios*” or “*Dyos*.” They also added diacritical marks to distinguish homophones, since many Waray words share the same spelling but have different meanings. At the same time, they consistently used apostrophes to indicate shortened words, such as “*hit*” (*hiton*), “*ak*” (*ako*), and “*bis*” (*bisan*).

Moreover, Prof. Villas shared that they followed specific rules for borrowing words. They preferred borrowing from closely related languages, such as Binisaya and Tagalog. They also borrowed terms from Spanish that could not be rendered in Waray, but adapted the spelling to fit local conventions. At the same time, they retained words from other languages that had already been widely adopted in Philippine culture, such as beer, brandy, and vodka.

Furthermore, Prof. Villas noted that the unmaking in *Paglaum* involved navigating certain tensions. One challenges the binary between the source and target texts. He explained that literary translation requires drawing on the cultural resources of both. Thus, the original is not always superior. Another tension arises between oral and written traditions. This requires the translator to balance and preserve elements between the reading culture of the source text and the listening culture of the target text.

Prof. Villas also discussed the unmaking between the opposition in the original text and its translation. He argued that translation is itself an original creation since it is shaped by the creativity of the translator. Over time, a translation can read like an original work in its own right. He termed this as the “poetics of the interstice,” highlighting how a translation exists in an in-between space yet can stand independently, as if it were never translated.

Prof. Villas also pointed to the unmaking of the long-standing hierarchy between Europe and the others. Traditionally, cultural and intellectual exchange has moved from Europe to the Philippines, reinforcing Europe as the center of knowledge and cultural production. However, through translation projects such as *Paglaum*, this direction is challenged and, in many ways, reversed. He further discussed the unmaking of the distinction between the standard and the variant. According to him, the translator has to navigate the uneasy relationship between the standard language and its variants. There will be certain negotiations throughout the translation process that only underscores how the country's languages are very diverse.

In closing, Prof. Villas emphasized that translators and translation scholars must learn to live with the many tensions inherent in translation. This is because it is fundamentally dialogic and cannot exist within a purely monolingual framework. Moreover, he emphasized how translation undoes the traditional flows of knowledge production from East to West, margin to center, and back. In this sense, it becomes a task that may feel impossible, yet one that must still be undertaken because there is often no one else to do the work except the native speakers of specific languages. While funding constraints persist, he encouraged translators to continue working because it is vital not only for strengthening languages, but also for sustaining a vibrant literary culture. As he put it, "While a literary culture cannot be founded on translation alone, it cannot do away with it either, and it would not even thrive without it."

Open Forum

Prof. Jessa A. Amarille, Chair of the Division of Humanities, facilitated the open forum for the second panel of discussants. The first question came from Dr. Oyzon, who asked Prof. Alunan to clarify why she chose to retain the word "*miga*" in her English translation of the poem *Gikan sa Germany Padulong sa Pilipinas—Mensabe sa Amigang Nag-inusara, Alang ni Joji* instead of translating it as "friend."

Prof. Alunan explained that, in her translation process, certain choices come almost instinctively and feel right without the need for much deliberation. However, she noted that this may stem from her conscious effort to form a link with the original text and its language. In this sense, her decision to retain the term "*miga*" serves as a way of maintaining that connection. Given this, she reiterated her earlier point on the importance of first identifying the persona

in the text because this is important for a translator to recognize the culture the speaker comes from, along with the attitudes and the soul that shape their utterances.

In connection to this, Prof. Gabunada shared a reflection, noting how the insights from the roundtable could help address the lack of clear and specific guidelines in translation. She referred to Prof. Alunan's point on identifying the persona, linking it to Mildred Larson's principle of maintaining naturalness in meaning-based translation. She also cited Prof. Villas' view that a translation is an original work, relating this idea to Ezra Pound's theory on the autonomy of translation. Thus, she emphasized that, although many people may not be fully aware of them, current translation practices already reflect long-established theoretical principles. These practices, she noted, simply need to be strengthened and supported through wider publication and institutionalization.

Afterward, Prof. Kenneth Cinco from VSU-Tolosa asked Dr. Oyzon for his perspective on the distinction between the Filipino language as it is spoken in daily life and its institutionalized form. He also asked how its shared patterns with other Philippine languages could inform a more representative national language.

Dr. Oyzon addressed the question by citing Zorc, who emphasized that surveys should look at how words are pronounced and used from the South to the North. For example, in Kapampangan, a sound may be rendered as "y," in the Central Philippines as "g," and in Mindanao as "l," resulting in interlinked words such as "*tayum*," "*tagum*," and "*talum*" across different regions. Using these connections, Dr. Oyzon highlighted the importance of building a Filipino language that is inclusive and representative of the country's linguistic diversity, rather than relying solely on Tagalog or selecting only certain words. This approach also acknowledges contributions from non-dominant languages, ensuring that Filipino reflects the broader spectrum of languages spoken across the country.

To contribute to the discussion, Prof. Alunan recounted her experience at Frankfurt, where she encountered the title *Philippine Literature in the Peripheries*. She noted how this title reflects how cultural and linguistic power remains concentrated in the capital, while other regions are often treated as "peripheries." Despite the long history since the American period and the

establishment of the National Language Policy, regional languages continue to occupy this marginal position. Yet, she stressed the importance of sustained efforts to keep these languages vibrant and visible.

Following this, a student from UPTC asked Prof. Alunan if there are cases where a worldview is too different that it cannot be fully captured in a particular language, and how translators navigate such situations. Prof. Alunan responded that this does happen, and addressing it requires a careful study of the context of the source text while remaining mindful of the context in which the translation will be received. She emphasized that translation is never a simple process because there will surely be moments when the translation takes precedence, and at other times the original text does. For this reason, she stressed that translators must remain open, willing to learn, and deeply attentive to meaning, while also staying grounded in who they are, where they come from, and who their intended readers are. As she put it, “It’s not the source text that matters, it’s you.”

To conclude, Prof. Alunan further illustrated her point by sharing her experience at the Frankfurt Book Fair, where her aim mainly was to bring Filipino works to a wider global audience and expand the boundaries of where Philippine literature can be read. She described this as an example of producing works that are accessible to an international readership without losing one’s identity as a Filipino writer. For her, this approach allows voices from the Philippines to be heard globally, while remaining rooted in the realities, perspectives, and experiences of the Filipino people.

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Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue
University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City 1101

Telephone (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268
(02) 8426-0955

Email cids@up.edu.ph
cidspublications@up.edu.ph

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