



PROCEEDINGS 2026-35

Local Regional Studies Network

Learning Materials Production Using Eastern Visayas Local Languages

*Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan: The Promotion of Eastern
Visayas Mother Tongues in Academic and Public Discourse*
Session 2

24 September 2025

Leyte Samar Heritage Center, UP Tacloban College (UPTC)



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Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan: The Promotion of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues in Academic and Public Discourse Session 1

19 September 2025
Leyte Samar Heritage Center, UP Tacloban College (UPTC)



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Best Practices in the Teaching
of Eastern Visayas Mother
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DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES 2026-13

Dialogues of Development

Civil Society and the Communicative Foundations of Community-Driven Development in Cebu

Dominic D. Yasay

Local Regional Studies Network

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DISCUSSION PAPER

Dialogues of Development_
Civil Society and the
Communicative Foundations
of Community-Driven
Development in Cebu

About the Roundtable Discussion

The roundtable discussion (RTD) on “Learning Materials Production Using Eastern Visayas Local Languages” was held on September 24, 2025 at the Leyte Samar Heritage Center, UP Tacloban College (UPTC). It was the second 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 Dr. Patricia B. Arinto, Dean of UPTC.

This RTD consisted of two panels of discussants. The first panel, “Local Languages in the Classroom” featured Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon of Leyte Normal University (LNU), Dr. Analyn C. España of Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU), Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag of Capul Central II Elementary School, and Ms. Firie Jill T. Ramos of KATIG Writers Network Inc. They shared their experiences in conducting studies on the development of learning materials and in crafting these using the local languages of Eastern Visayas. Meanwhile, the second panel, “Local Languages in the Classroom...and Beyond,” was composed of Mr. Herminigildo A. Sanchez of MSFM 105.3 Catbalogan City, Dr. Dominador L. Pagliawan of Burauen Community College, Mr. Reyan L. Arinto of Philippine Information Agency Region VIII, and Prof. Phil Harold L. Mercurio of Northwest Samar State University (NwSSU). They discussed their experiences and insights on the gains and challenges in producing materials in media, arts, and literature that incorporate Eastern Visayas local languages.

Each panel discussion was followed by an open forum where participants engaged in conversations about the use of local languages in the production of learning materials. The participants included communication specialists from the Philippine Information Agency, Department of Agriculture (DA), Tacloban City Information Office, and other non-government organizations (NGOs). Also in attendance were faculty members and students from UPTC, LNU, and EVSU.

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

PRESENTATIONS

Panel 1: Local Languages in the Classroom

The first panel, “Local Languages in the Classroom,” featured Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon, Dr. Analyn C. España, Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag, and Ms. Firie Jill T. Ramos who discussed their personal initiatives related to the development of learning materials using Eastern Visayas local languages.

A Comparative Study of Major Waray Dialects

Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon

Professor, Leyte Normal University

To open his discussion, Dr. Oyzon posed the question, “Can stories written in the Tacloban dialect be effectively used as material in places like Catbalogan, Calbayog, Catarman, and Borongan?” To expound on this, he cited Zorc’s (1977) classification of four major Waray varieties based on shared lexical and grammatical features—Northern Samar, Samar-Leyte, Waray, and Gubat. He also referred to Lobel’s (2013) expanded list of 12 Waray dialects, which includes Northwestern Samarenyo, Northern Samarenyo, Eastern Samar Waray, Calbayog Waray, Culaba Waray, Leyte Waray, Abuyog Waray, Porohanon, Baybayanon/Utudnon, Kinabalian, Bantayanon, and Waray West/South Samar. However, Dr. Oyzon pointed out that although these variations show how the Waray language differs across areas, they do not directly answer the question he raised earlier.

Dr. Oyzon highlighted that the challenge of using uniform learning materials across different areas with different dialects arose from the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program. He shared that teachers often encounter students who complain that certain terms in their learning materials are unfamiliar, which makes it difficult for them to understand or relate to the content. For example, in Tacloban, the word “*baba*” means mouth, but in Catarman, people use “*hiwa*” for the same thing. Thus, to explore this issue, he and his team conducted a comparative study of the major Waray dialects spoken in Catbalogan, Calbayog, Catarman, and Borongan.



Figure 1. Presentation by discussant Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon

$$DDI = \frac{x(0.33333)}{100} + \frac{y(0.33333)}{10} + \frac{z(0.33333)}{52}$$

where

\underline{x} = number of identical words between the two varieties compared.

\underline{y} = number of identical perspectivizing affixes

\underline{z} = number of identical pronouns

Figure 2. Calculating the Dialectal Distance Index

Demonstrating their methodology, Dr. Oyzon explained that they relied on the Leipzig-Jakarta 100-item-list of basic vocabulary, a set of words that linguists consider resistant to borrowing from other languages. Using this list, the disparity between the vocabularies of different communities can be systematically assessed. A lower disparity indicates greater similarity, which implies that materials written in one dialect are more likely to be effectively understood in the other. Furthermore, he illustrated that they also identified Waray pronouns and ten perspectivizing affixes like “*na*,” “*gin*,” and “*um*.” They then used elicitation sentences to capture how these features varied across different dialects. After collecting the data, they quantified it and measured how far each dialect deviated from Tacloban Waray, which served as the baseline, using the Waray Dialect Distance Index (DDI) they developed.

The findings revealed notable differences among the Waray dialects in terms of lexical vocabulary, pronouns, and perspectivizing affixes. For instance, the

word “*pakadto*” (to go) in Tacloban corresponds to “*makadto*” in Calbayog and “*malanga*” in Borongan. Similarly, the second-person pronoun “*kamo*” in Tacloban has “*kam*” as its equivalent in Calbayog. Moreover, for the root word “*kaon*,” four of the dialects use “*ginkaon*” with the affix “(g)-in-,” whereas Borongan uses “*kinaon*” with the affix “-in-.” These were identified and counted as indicators of variation across the dialects.

Table 1. Vocabulary difference between dialects using the Leipzig-Jakarta List of Basic Vocabulary

Word meaning	Equivalent word in Tacloban	Equivalent word in Catbalogan	Equivalent word in Calbayog	Equivalent word in Catarman	Equivalent word in Borongan
to go	pakadto/ lakad/larga		makadto		malanga
mouth	bábà			hiwa	
2nd person pronoun	ikaw/kamo		kam'		
root	ugat			gamot	
to come	pakadi			kadina	
1st person pronoun	ako			ak'	
wing	pakô	pakpak			
flesh/meat	unod			tayod	

Table 2. Comparison of perspectivizing affixes in five Waray dialects

Perspectivizing value	Tacloban	Catbalogan	Borongan	Catarman	Calbayog
Realis, controlled, transitive	(g)-in-	(g)-in-	-in-	(g)-in-	(g)-in-
Realis, controlled, intransitive	-um-	-um-	-in-	-in-	-in-
Realis, happenstantial, intransitive	na-	na-	na-	na-	na-
Realis, happenstantial, transitive	na-	na-	na-	na-	na-
Irrealis, predicted, transitive	-on	-on	-on	-on	-on

Perspectivizing value	Tacloban	Catbalogan	Borongan	Catarman	Calbayog
Irrealis, predicted, intransitive	ma-	ma-	ma-	ma-	ma-
Irrealis, decided/immanent	ti-	ti-	ti-	ti-	ti-
Subjunctive, transitive		-a/i(g)	-a	i-	-a/i(g)
Subjunctive, intransitive	zero	zero	zero	zero	zero
Subjunctive, applicative	-i	-i	-i	-i	-i

Table 3. Absolutive case of personal pronouns of dialects of Waray language

	Absolutive				
	Tacloban	Catbalogan	Borongan	Calbayog	Catarman
1st person singular	ako	ako	ak'	ako	ako/ak'
1st person inclusive	kita	kita	kita/kit'	kita/kit'	kita/kit'
1st person exclusive	kami	kami	kami/kam'	kami/kam'	kami
2nd person singular	=ka(short); ikaw	=ka(short); ikaw	=ka(short); ikaw	=ka(short); ikaw	=ka(short); ikaw
2nd person plural	kamo	kamo	kamo	kam'	kamo/kam'
3rd person singular	hiya	hiya	hiya	siya	siya
3rd person plural	hira	hira	hira	sira	sira

Table 4. Composite dialect distance indices

	Lexical vocabulary	Perspectivizing affixes	Pronouns	DDI
Tacloban	100	10	52	1.0
Catbalogan	0.996 (0.33333) = 0.332	1 (0.33333) = 0.333	1 (0.33333) = 0.333	0.996
Calbayog	0.88 (0.33333) = 0.293	1 (0.33333) = 0.299	0.615 (0.33333) = 0.333	0.811
Borongan	0.92 (0.33333) = 0.307	0.8 (0.33333) = 0.267	0.654 (0.33333) = 0.218	0.792
Catarman	0.83 (0.33333) = 0.277	0.7 (0.33333) = 0.233	0.5 (0.33333) = 0.167	0.677

The study showed the following dialectal distance index (DDI) scores: Catbalogan (0.996), Calbayog (0.811), Borongan (0.792), and Catarman (0.677). According to Dr. Oyzon, based on Zorc (1984), a DDI score of 0.9 or higher may still be regarded as indicating near identity, with an approximate 10 percent difference. Thus, based on this threshold, only Catbalogan may feasibly share MTB-MLE learning materials with Tacloban. Meanwhile, Calbayog, Borongan, and Catarman would require instructional materials developed in their respective dialects to align with the linguistic context of their learners.

Furthermore, Dr. Oyzon noted that some scholars use an even stricter threshold, considering only a two percent difference when assessing linguistic similarity. He added that a Levenshtein Distance (LDN) score of 0.48 is commonly used as a threshold to classify two dialects as separate languages, and Catarman's score is already close to this level. This highlights the considerable linguistic distance between Catarman and Tacloban, accounting for the difficulties learners in Catarman experience when engaging with learning materials written in the Tacloban dialect.

In closing, Dr. Oyzon suggested that future studies could shift the reference point from Tacloban to other areas, such as Catbalogan, Calbayog, Catarman, and Borongan, to determine which communities could potentially share learning materials. He also suggested conducting a more comprehensive survey of Waray dialects, such as comparisons of Tacloban Waray with nearby municipalities such as Palo and Tanauan. He stressed, however, that such research would require adequate funding and support.

Unearthing Folkloric Narratives for Pedagogic Material Development: Sustaining Waray in the Evolving MTB-MLE Landscape

Dr. Analyn C. España

*Vice President for Research and Development, and Extension Services,
Eastern Visayas State University*

Dr. España's presentation titled "Samareño Folkloric Narratives as Pedagogic Resource for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education" was motivated by the scarcity of Waray-based teaching and reading materials aligned with MTB-MLE goals, the need for pedagogy contextualized in traditional narratives, and the shrinking Waray literary corpus. By documenting folkloric narratives from



Figure 3. Presentation by discussant Dr. Analyñ C. España

Northern, Eastern, and Western Samar, she aimed to both preserve the Waray language and promote culturally grounded teaching through the MTB-MLE program.

Citing UNESCO (2016) and Walter and Dekker (2011), Dr. España noted that learners instructed in their mother tongue during their early years outperform those taught solely in foreign or national languages. She highlighted, however, that mother tongue instruction carries important pedagogic imperatives, including the use of culturally relevant content for literacy development (Mojares 2015), linguistic scaffolds to teach grammar and vocabulary (Stern 1987), and values education through indigenous moral frameworks (Guzman 2014). Thus, she emphasized the importance of having adequate resources and learning materials that reflect the cultural and linguistic context of the local communities, along with active community participation, to ensure the effective implementation of the MTB-MLE program in the region.

Several challenges threaten the survival of local languages in the region, including colonial disruption, linguistic marginalization, and the lack of written anthologies. This is why, according to Dr. España, it is important for native speakers to actively work toward strengthening the local languages through collaborative efforts. Whether it involves large-scale initiatives, such as contextualizing pedagogy, or smaller actions, such as translating popular tales like *Cinderella* and creating original stories in the local language, these efforts play a crucial role. They can help ensure that the language remains visible, actively used, and ultimately preserved.

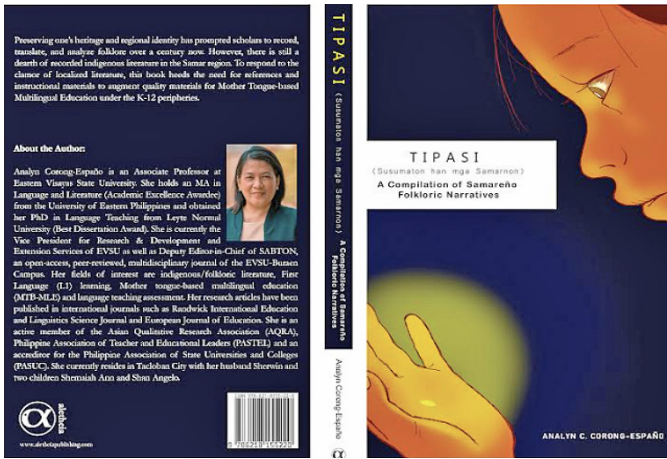


Figure 4. *Tipasi (Susumaton han mga Samarnon): A Compilation of Samareño Folkloric Narratives*



Figure 5. Illustration of *Kamug* from “*Tipasi*”

Dr. España shared that she makes a conscious effort to promote and preserve the Waray language and culture, specifically to ensure that its stories and traditions remain accessible to future generations. Her doctoral dissertation produced *Tipasi (Susumaton han mga Samarnon): A Compilation of Samareño Folkloric Narratives*, a collection of 17 stories encompassing myths, legends, and folktales. Examples include *Kamug* from Bobon, Northern Samar; *City Papan* from Sta. Rita, Samar; and *Monbon ha Balangiga* from Balangiga, Eastern Samar.

The folkloric narratives compiled by Dr. España are now being used as materials in EVSU’s Department of Languages and Literature extension program,

“Mothering Teachers,” in Brgy. Sto. Niño, Tacloban City. She noted, however, that the stories are currently being translated because they are in a different dialect from the one spoken in Tacloban, which she related to Dr. Oyzon’s earlier point about the importance of identifying differences among Waray dialects and determining which communities can share learning materials.

Moreover, Dr. España shared that further efforts are underway to integrate these narratives into the university curriculum. This includes offering Waray Arts and Culture as a General Education course, which is made mandatory for select programs at EVSU. According to her, this aims to promote both the development of culturally grounded learning among students and the preservation of Waray language and culture.

In closing, Dr. España stressed that teaching in the mother tongue means teaching learners from their heart. This approach allows students to connect more deeply with the lessons and relate them to their own experiences. Thus, she concluded that MTB-MLE succeeds not merely when children learn to read, but when they read themselves in what they learn.

Determining Learning Needs and Designing Inabaknon-Based Worktext for Abaknon Learners

Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag

Teacher III, Capul Central II Elementary School

Dr. Banagbanag discussed his study, “Strategies and Problems in Teaching Inabaknon-Based Instruction: Bases for Developing a Worktext for Grade Three.” He explained that this research was undertaken to address the scarcity of instructional materials in Inabaknon, which has posed challenges for Abaknon teachers in effectively implementing the MTB-MLE program in their classrooms. Since Capul is the only area in Northern Samar where the language is spoken, only native speakers of Inabaknon can produce materials that truly meet the learning needs of the learners in their mother tongue.

According to Dr. Banagbanag, his research revealed four core learning needs of grade three pupils in Capul: (1) materials written entirely in Inabaknon, (2) visual aids to enhance comprehension, (3) instructions that are simple, direct, and use familiar vocabulary, and (4) teaching materials aligned with the



Figure 6. Presentation by discussant Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag

Department of Education (DepEd) curriculum and compatible with teachers' existing strategies. Moreover, the study also identified several challenges faced by teachers, including: (1) difficulty in translating stories and poems from Waray to Inabaknon, (2) the absence of clear rules for teaching Inabaknon grammar, (3) a lack of books written in Inabaknon, and (4) limited training on Inabaknon orthography. To address these, he developed an Inabaknon worktext comprising 44 lesson activities, designed to cover the curriculum across four grading periods.

Dr. Banagbanag outlined several key considerations in developing the worktext. He explained that the content was selected through a curriculum-based approach, which involved reviewing the grade three MTB-MLE competencies and organizing topics that aligned with the prescribed learning outcomes. To ensure linguistic relevance, he also incorporated stories written in pure Inabaknon and paired them with simplified instructions to support independent comprehension among pupils. In addition, visual illustrations were added to help learners better understand and internalize key ideas presented in the text. Dr. Banagbanag also emphasized that each lesson was designed to target a specific reading skill, such as sequencing events or drawing inferences, to strengthen learners' literacy development. Most importantly, he made sure that the worktext supported teaching strategies such as group work activities, collaborative teaching, translation and contextualization, and enhancement activities and games.

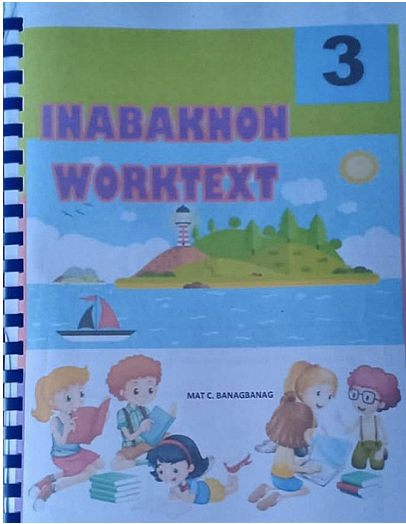


Figure 7. Inabaknon worktext for Grade 3 pupils in Capul

The Inabaknon worktext, according to Dr. Banagbanag, was evaluated by Inabaknon translators from the Summer Institute of Linguistics using a checklist adapted from Jean K. Lartec's study, *Developing and Evaluating Big Books*. The evaluation assessed (1) the appropriateness of the materials, (2) clarity and consistency of language rules, (3) the structure and relevance of comprehension questions, and (4) the overall coherence and usability of the worktext. The material also underwent quality assurance from the DepEd Northern Samar Quality Assurance Team. The results confirmed the worktext's suitability

for MTB-MLE instruction, given that its content aligns with contexts familiar and relevant to the pupils. Dr. Banagbanag proudly shared that it is now being used by grade three learners in Capul as a reference material.

Writing Children's Story

Ms. Firie Jill T. Ramos

President, KATIG Writers Network Inc.

Ms. Ramos' presentation emphasized the significance of reading to children as a foundational practice for vocabulary development. She underscored the critical role of books in supporting a child's growth and emphasized that regular reading, such as on a nightly basis, is a must for children. She also stressed the need for parents to sustain regular conversations with their children, particularly in the context of contemporary parenting practices that expose them to gadgets and television at an early age. She linked this to the vital role of writing children's stories, noting that such materials serve not only pedagogical but also sociocultural functions.

According to Ms. Ramos, the primary purpose of writing children's stories is pedagogical. She emphasized the necessity of developing such materials to effectively support teaching and learning. This ensures that children have



Figure 8. Presentation by discussant Ms. Firie Jill T. Ramos

access to resources that foster language acquisition, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the lessons being taught. Furthermore, Ms. Ramos highlighted that writing children's stories serves an important sociocultural purpose. She stressed the need to preserve the local languages of Eastern Visayas and safeguard the cultural heritage of its communities. She also pointed out that this goal is tied to the history of MTB-MLE, which, although initially successful, faced setbacks due to its discontinuation. Thus, reading to children is all the more essential to ensure that children develop familiarity and fluency in their mother tongue.

Building on this, Ms. Ramos emphasized that teaching children to read requires a proper sequence and developmental approach. She noted that many parents today attempt to introduce the alphabet to their children as early as three years old, which is not suitable for their developmental stage. With this, she outlined the five stages of reading.

The first stage is emergent reading, for children aged 0 to 5 years. This stage develops oral language, phonemic awareness, and letter recognition. Reading books to children during this period is essential to strengthen children's awareness of sound and enable them to begin understanding fundamental concepts. Ms. Ramos underscored that this stage is critical not only for language development but also for the child's overall growth. She pointed out that failing to acquire essential skills during this period can result in gaps that are difficult to address later in life.

The second stage is early reading, which applies to children aged 5 to 7 years, typically corresponding to kindergarten through grade one. Ms. Ramos explained that at this stage, instruction focuses on phonics, word recognition, reading comprehension, reading fluency, vocabulary expansion, and the introduction of basic writing skills. She then stressed the importance of providing children with high-quality formal education during these formative years. This is because errors in teaching children during this period can have a profound effect on a child's overall development. She related this to the ongoing issue in the Philippines, where many daycare workers lack the appropriate competencies to teach young learners effectively and are often underpaid. According to Ms. Ramos, learners in kindergarten should be taught by individuals with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education to ensure they receive a solid and developmentally appropriate foundation. Achieving this requires adequate support and budget for early childhood education programs.

The third stage is transitional reading, encompassing children aged 7 to 9 years. According to Ms. Ramos, children at this stage demonstrate enhanced reading and comprehension skills, have expanded their vocabulary, and can engage with a variety of text genres. The fourth stage, intermediate reading, covers children aged 9 to 12 years and focuses on the development of critical thinking, text analysis, engagement with diverse reading materials, and writing skills. The fifth stage, advanced reading, includes children aged 12 years and above, during which they further develop deep comprehension and a broader vocabulary.

Considering the five stages of reading as essential for developing proficient readers, Ms. Ramos raised concerns about the availability of materials that could effectively support children's progression through each stage. She highlighted that the education crisis in the Philippines remains unresolved, noting that some senior high school students struggle to comprehend even simple paragraphs, finding it difficult to communicate in basic English. She attributed part of this problem to contemporary parenting trends, where children are often taught in the English language first and tend to mix it with Tagalog or Waray. Thus, children are unable to develop sufficient skills in their mother tongue or in other languages, resulting in a lack of mastery in either.

Ms. Ramos noted that research indicates strong literacy in the mother tongue positively influences the development of reading and writing skills in a second language. She emphasized the concept of "cross-linguistic transfer," also known as the linguistic interdependence hypothesis, which posits that mastery of the mother tongue facilitates learning in a second language. According to her, countries with high ratings in Integrated Performance Assessments (IPA)

and other literacy tests typically teach children in their mother tongue from early childhood up to fourth grade. Thus, to foster reading comprehension, second language acquisition, number readiness, and numeracy, she stressed that the country should prioritize developing mastery of the mother tongue among learners. She illustrated that, in Eastern Visayas, children should not be introduced to concepts like “add” or “put together” right away. Instead, these concepts should be taught in the mother tongue, for instance, “It duha, dugangan naton hin duha, magiging upat” (Two plus two equals four). Still, concerns about the availability of suitable materials for children in the region persist. Ms. Ramos then highlighted that responding to the broader issues linked to the country’s education crisis must begin with a careful reassessment of how early childhood education is being approached and implemented.

On a more positive note, Ms. Ramos shared that KATIG Writers Network Inc. has previously implemented several children’s book projects in partnership with Save the Children and Leyte Normal University. They also collaborated closely with teachers across various provinces in developing big books during the height of the MTB-MLE implementation. She added that the organization has many more works in progress that only require adequate funding for completion.

While some materials in local languages already exist, she emphasized that these remain insufficient to meet the needs of young learners. Thus, Ms. Ramos expressed hope that more writers would continue producing children’s stories, noting that no one is better positioned to do this work than the region’s own native speakers and those capable of creating culturally grounded instructional materials.

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. The first question was raised by Ms. Tiffany Kem Millamena, a first-year BA Political Science student from UPTC. She addressed the persistent notion that local languages lack prestige and are not suited for academic use, and asked how this view may be corrected, especially in higher education.

In response, Dr. Oyzon noted that, on a personal level, he would simply write a good *siday* (poem). Quoting a Latin American writer, he reiterated the idea that “your only obligation is to write well.” He explained that a language earns prestige when its own speakers produce strong, well-crafted works in it. He

added that nations are not built merely through monuments, but through the enduring power of their literature.

Dr. España affirmed Dr. Oyzon's point, emphasizing that the development of the Philippines as a nation has long been anchored in the richness of its literature and history. She stressed that a country should strive not only for economic progress, but also for cultural richness. She encouraged everyone to continue writing to preserve the tangible and intangible aspects of Filipino culture and tradition. If creating an original story is difficult for some, she suggested documenting local narratives in the local language, as she did in her own research. She concluded with a striking reminder: "Publish, or if not, perish." Dr. Banagbanag concurred with the previous discussants and likewise encouraged continued writing, stressing that literature created in the mother tongue plays a crucial role in preserving native languages.

Ms. Ramos reflected on the question, noting that the perception of Waray or other local languages as lacking prestige often arises because these languages are primarily associated with everyday conversation or communication with ordinary people. She emphasized that if such a question comes to mind, it indicates a need for intrapersonal reflection. This perspective, she added, reflects the persistence of colonial mentalities among Filipinos. Ms. Ramos underscored the need for individuals to reach a level of self-awareness that allows them to critically reflect on their circumstances and identity. She emphasized that state universities like UPTC, LNU and EVSU, as institutions funded by the taxes of the Filipino people, have a particular responsibility to lead in this effort. When broader society hesitates to take the initiative, these institutions must step forward to lead change, especially in encouraging the value of being unique and different in a global context that often prioritizes homogenization.

Dr. Oyzon contributed to the ongoing discussion by emphasizing that promoting local languages does not equate to rejecting English. He noted that proficiency in English is essential, as it functions as an international language necessary for global communication and transactions. However, he cautioned that this should never come at the expense of one's mother tongue. Dr. España agreed, expressing her desire to diminish the notion of language superiority and inferiority. She underscored that each local language is unique and equally valuable. Citing the saying, "Language dies when nobody uses it," she warned that the people of Eastern Visayas should actively preserve their local languages before it is too late. She concluded that while it is acceptable to use other languages, one must also continue to nurture and honor their native languages.

Mr. Rovene Ramos, a BA Psychology student from UPTC, shared that he is currently exploring indigenous psychology within the Waray context for his thesis. As he delves deeper into his research, he has observed that many concepts in the local language are deeply connected to the community's cultural and psychological practices. However, he also realized firsthand how scarce locally grounded references are. This led him to ask whether there are repositories or online resources that could provide easier access to these concepts.

Ms. Ramos responded by pointing him toward existing resources that may support his research. Among these are the five-language classified dictionary developed by LNU with Dr. Oyzon, the online linguistic corpus, and two volumes by Macabenta. She also commended his study for its promise and expressed hope that it would eventually grow into a substantial linguistic resource for the region. Dr. España likewise commended the study and suggested visiting the Samar Studies Center at the University of Eastern Philippines. She noted that the center houses a substantial collection of resources, particularly as the institution offers a Doctor of Arts in Language and Literature program. She further recommended consulting Prof. Emeritus dela Rosa, a prominent figure in local literature in Northern Samar with an extensive collection of stories. Dr. España also offered to help establish contact with her to gain access to these materials.

Following this, Prof. Phil Harold Mercurio, one of the discussants, directed a question to Dr. Oyzon. He expressed interest in Dr. Oyzon's dialectal distance study, noting that it directly relates to concerns raised by teachers in Calbayog. Since the materials provided there are in the Tacloban dialect, teachers have no choice but to balance their regular workload while translating the resources. He asked whether the findings of this study have been shared with policymakers in the region or with DepEd. Prof. Mercurio also asked a follow-up question about the possibility of a dialectal distance study involving Inabaknon. Noting that Capul is surrounded by Waray-speaking communities, he wondered whether Inabaknon has, over time, adopted words from Waray.

In response to the first question of Prof. Mercurio, Dr. Oyzon shared that he conducted the study last year for a book honoring Nolasco. However, although the research has been completed, the book has not yet been published. Furthermore, for the follow-up question, Dr. Oyzon expressed that it is very intriguing, but stressed that a formal study would be needed to answer it. He explained that the research is complex, as it would need to examine potential borrowings between Waray and Inabaknon, as well as compile a comprehensive

inventory of sounds to track phonetic changes over time. While feasible, he noted that the study would require significant time and adequate funding.

Moving forward, another question was raised by Mr. Jofken Apoya Jr., a second-year BA in Filipino student at EVSU. He referred to an article he read on Rapppler, which discussed how Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results were being cited as a reason for the discontinuation of the MTB-MLE program. Based on this, Mr. Apoya asked what weaknesses of the program, aside from the political factors, could have been addressed to better promote local languages not only in academic discourse but also on an international scale.

To address the question, Ms. Ramos emphasized that the low PISA scores of the Philippines should not be blamed on the MTB-MLE program. She outlined three major reasons why the country lags in such assessments. First, she pointed out that, unlike other countries, the Philippines frequently revises its curriculum whenever a new DepEd secretary is appointed. These constant changes create confusion for teachers, disrupt lesson continuity, and prevent students from building knowledge progressively.

Second, she noted that countries who top the PISA such as Finland, Singapore, and Japan have sustained strong education systems for over five decades. In Finland, early childhood education is play-based and follows Montessori principles, which gives children a balanced and engaging start to learning. Learners are also not required to spend excessive hours in school and are given enough child support by their government. Their curriculum is also autonomous, Ms. Ramos emphasized. This allows each region or community to devise a curriculum that aligns with the local context and the language of their children. Moreover, in Singapore, teachers are required to build a strong foundation before entering the profession. Aspiring teachers first specialize in their chosen field often through advanced studies like a master's degree. Only after this do they undergo a formal teacher-training program, where they learn pedagogy and classroom practice. Furthermore, in Japan, students are not given formal examinations from grades one to three and only begin taking standardized tests in grade four. According to Ms. Ramos their curriculum prioritizes nurturing foundational skills such as emotional development, civic responsibility, independence, and proper conduct in the early years.

Third, Ms. Ramos emphasized that many high-performing countries invest heavily in supporting their teachers and ensuring adequate learning resources. In these systems, teachers are able to work under conditions that allow them to

focus on teaching rather than compensating for the lack of materials or taking on excessive administrative tasks. Therefore, Ms. Ramos pointed out that the Philippines' low PISA scores should not be attributed to the MTB-MLE, but to other educational issues that need to be addressed. She added that many top-performing countries also start teaching children in their mother tongue, which only shows that early mastery of the first language helps build a solid foundation for learning.

Mr. Apoya raised a follow-up question, asking how the Philippines could adapt the practices of top-performing PISA countries to its own context to build a stronger and more stable educational system that could eventually improve the country's ranking in PISA. Dr. Oyzon responded by underscoring the need for better implementation of the MTB-MLE program. He noted that mastering a first language usually requires a minimum of 12 years, whereas in the Philippines, children are exposed to it for only three years. He also pointed out that PISA tests are administered in English and that the test questions are often unrelated to the local context, which puts Filipino students at a disadvantage. Altogether, he noted, these factors make the issue quite complex.

In addition, Ms. Angeline Parado, a faculty member of the Early Childhood Education program at Leyte Normal University, posed a question regarding how parents contribute to the challenges faced by the MTB-MLE program. She observed that some parents resist using Waray because their children struggle with English spelling when transitioning to grade four. Others question the relevance of using the mother tongue because they anticipate that their children will be expected to speak English in college anyway, and they worry this may lead to bullying if their English skills are limited. Ms. Parado thus sought clarification on whether this issue stems from the curriculum itself or from parental attitudes.

In response, Dr. España emphasized that promoting the use of the mother tongue among children is not solely the government's responsibility. Several factors play a role, including the child's environment and, most importantly, the home. She acknowledged, however, that parents cannot be entirely blamed for their perspective. Thus, it takes consistent effort to help them understand and appreciate the goals of the MTB-MLE program and eventually encourage them to actively support their children in learning and using their local language. Effective implementation, she stressed, depends on the full support of the government, schools, and parents working together.

Panel 2: Local Languages in the Classroom...and Beyond

The second panel, “Local Languages in the Classroom...and Beyond,” featured Mr. Herminigildo A. Sanchez, Dr. Dominador L. Pagliawan, Mr. Reyan L. Arinto, and Prof. Phil Harold L. Mercurio who shared their experiences in developing materials using the local languages of Eastern Visayas in their respective fields.

Ha Pagpalangbo han Aton Pinulungan

Mr. Herminigildo A. Sanchez

Radio Broadcaster, MSFM 105.3, Catbalogan City, Samar

To begin his discussion, Mr. Sanchez highlighted the importance of local languages in shaping people’s cognitive, cultural, and identity development. He explained that using the local language supports cognitive growth, shaping how individuals think, reason, and make sense of the world around them. It also allows them to appreciate their heritage, values, and cultural practices. According to Mr. Sanchez, the local languages are rich in oral traditions, including *siday* (poems), *susumaton* (oral narratives), and *titiguhon* (riddles). By engaging with these cultural expressions, people develop a stronger sense of belonging and take greater pride in their language and identity.

Moving forward, Mr. Sanchez performed a poem from his collection, *Hagsi: Haglipot nga Siday (Short Poems)*. “*Kaupay han aga/Adlaw mahimaya/*



Figure 9. Presentation by discussant Mr. Herminigildo A. Sanchez

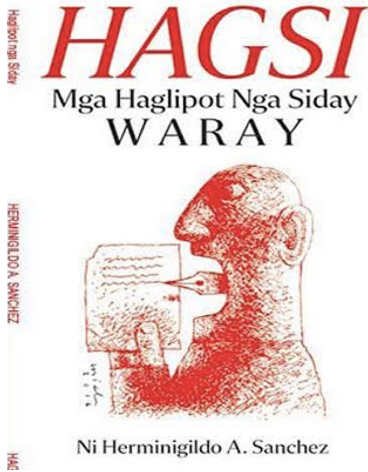


Figure 10. *Hagsi: Mga Haglipot nga Siday Waray*

Kape nagtitikarasa/Kun tugbang im hinigugma” (This morning is good/ This day are serene/Coffee tastes better/ When drank beside one’s beloved). He explained that the collection was inspired by a group they formed, where they would regularly come together to write short poems. He shared that poetry serves as his personal way of promoting the Waray language. He sees it as a means to inspire others to appreciate and use Waray in creative and meaningful ways.

Beyond writing poems, Mr. Sanchez shared that he actively performs them at various events. He makes it a point to

accept every invitation from schools and other organizations, believing that these performances help audiences appreciate both the artistry of the poems and the richness of the language. In addition, he leverages his role as a radio broadcaster to present siday live on air. Listeners often submit their own poems, and he also seeks out works by other local writers to feature on the program. He also shared that he adapts some of his poems into songs, and one of his works was even selected as a finalist in the Samar Pop Music Festival.

Mr. Sanchez concluded by emphasizing that promoting local languages means nurturing and using them daily in whatever activities people engage in, especially within one’s home and immediate community. Drawing from his own efforts of integrating Waray into his poetry, performances, radio programs,



Figure 11. Mr. Sanchez performing a siday at MSFM 105.3

and songs, he believes that everyone can contribute in their own ways to help local languages thrive. These practices, he explained, help keep local languages visible, active, and alive for future generations.

Beyond Classroom Confines: Promoting Local Languages through Cultural and Creative Ventures

Dr. Dominador L. Pagliawan

Director, Research and Extension, Burauen Community College

Dr. Pagliawan discussed the various ways through which he promotes his local language, Waray. He shared that he consistently incorporates Waray into his creative and professional work, whether in editorial cartooning, writing newspaper columns and feature articles, composing songs, painting, producing books, doing translations, or attending creative writing workshops. Through these, he ensures that the language remains accessible to different audiences.



Figure 12. Presentation by discussant Dr. Dominador L. Pagliawan

In his editorial cartooning, Dr. Pagliawan shared that he uses Waray in the dialogues of his characters to make the message easier for local readers to understand. One of his cartoons, for instance, shows a crocodile saying “*Malipayon nga pag-abot!*” (Welcome!) to a foreign tourist—an image that symbolizes opportunistic drivers who greet visitors warmly but later overcharge them. By using this Waray phrase, he grounds the cartoon in a situation familiar to locals, especially since similar incidents also occur in Tacloban.



Figure 13. Editorial cartoon by Dr. Pagliawan



Kaon-kaonay

Didto ha Huron

Figure 14. Paintings by Dr. Pagliawan

Dr. Pagliawan further explained that he also uses his work as a journalist to promote Waray by consistently writing about the language. Many of his columns, features, and editorials focus on Waray-related issues and insights, with titles such as “On Waray Learning Materials,” “Waray Makes Headways,” “Some Waray Trivia,” “What Ails Waray Writing,” and “*Gidudunggoti*.” Through these pieces, he contributes to raising awareness, sparking conversations, and encouraging appreciation for the language in public discourse. Similarly, as a painter, he strengthens the visibility of Waray by using the language for the titles of his artworks. Some of his pieces carry distinctly Waray titles such as “*Kaon-kaonay*,” “*Didto ha Huron*,” “*Latayan*,” and “*Pag-ampo ha Kapawa*.”

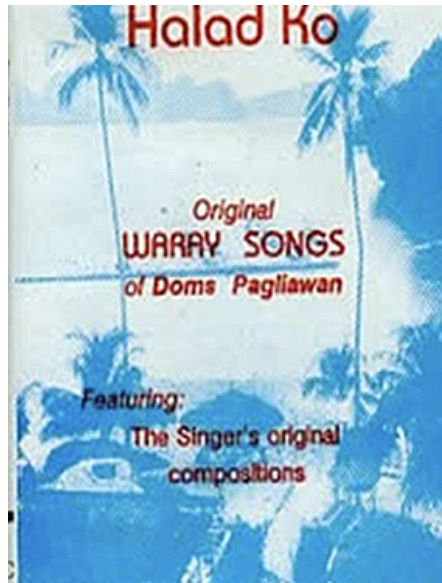


Figure 15. *Halad Ko* by Dr. Pagliawan

Furthermore, as a composer-lyricist, Dr. Pagliawan shared that he has produced five music albums, many of which feature songs in Waray, alongside a few in Filipino and English. Some of his notable compositions in the local language include “*Halad Ko*,” “*Ha Bukid*,” and “*Waray-waray*.” Through music, he continues to broaden the presence of Waray across different audiences and creative genres.

Additionally, Dr. Pagliawan discussed his published works, noting that he has written seven books to date, including *Kuraramag*. He also engages in translation work, having adapted stories such as *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, *Manjab’s Just Desserts*, and *The King Who Outlawed Laughter into Waray*. He noted, however, that these works still lack sufficient funding and support for publication. Even so, Dr. Pagliawan remains hopeful, stressing that since the manuscripts are already completed, they can readily serve as reference materials for those who may need them. He stressed that the key is to remain consistent in working in Waray to keep the language relevant. As an example of this commitment, he shared that his current project involves translating the King James Version of the Bible into Waray.

Dr. Pagliawan also talked through the creative writing workshops he has both attended and conducted. From these experiences, he shared the key reminders he would often tell writing enthusiasts, students, and teachers.

First, he emphasized the importance of writing in the language they know best, which is usually their native language. Second, he encouraged writing in the language they naturally think in, which is often also their mother tongue. Third, he stressed the significance of contributing to the enrichment of local literature. Since Waray literature remains one of the least developed literary traditions in the Philippines, he stressed that every effort—whether writing poems, translating works, or producing other literary forms—helps strengthen and preserve it. This ties into his fourth point, which is on the importance of documenting how local languages are used by the current generation. Such documentation will allow future generations to analyze and understand how the Waray language has been spoken, written, and lived over time. Fifth, Dr. Pagliawan highlighted the importance of drawing inspiration from local materials. He pointed out that the community is filled with fresh, authentic, and original stories, and these rich narratives are simply waiting to be written. With this, he urged everyone to continue creating works in the local language and to keep contributing to the growth of Waray literature.

Mass Media as a Tool for Waray Language Promotion

Mr. Reyan L. Arinto

Regional Head, Philippine Information Agency, Regional Office No. 8, Tacloban City

Mr. Arinto shared his experiences as a media practitioner who actively incorporates the Waray language into his work. He explained that mass media—whether radio, television, or print—hold significant influence because they reach diverse audiences. For this reason, using Waray in these platforms becomes a powerful way to keep the language heard and seen, which can contribute to its preservation. At the same time, he stressed that this practice reinforces the place of Waray speakers within the broader national identity.

According to Mr. Arinto, radio remains one of the most accessible forms of media in Eastern Visayas. Because of this, local stations cater to their audiences by producing Waray-language programs ranging from news and talk shows to music segments and storytelling. Several stations use Waray in their broadcasts, including DYVL News: Voice of Leyte, DYBR, and Bombo Radyo Tacloban. DYVL, for instance, airs a program called DYVL Siday, where listeners send in their siday (poems) to be read on air.



Figure 16. Presentation by discussant Mr. Reyhan L. Arinto

Furthermore, in recent years, more television programs have begun featuring the Waray language. These range from brief news segments to full-length newscasts, talk shows, and commentary programs. Mr. Arinto cited examples such as TV Patrol, Frontline Eastern Visayas, Arangkada, and PRTV 12, which is the longest-running TV station in Tacloban. According to him, these platforms significantly expand the visibility of Waray.

Several local newspapers and magazines in Eastern Visayas include sections or articles written in Waray. Examples include Leyte Samar Daily Express, Tacloban Stars, and Sunday Punch, which feature news, poetry, and other content in the language. Mr. Arinto also mentioned 8 Magazine, which also publishes some articles in Waray. However, he noted that the promotion of Waray in print remains limited, as publications typically allocate only one to two pages for content in or about the language.

Mr. Arinto highlighted that promoting the Waray language still faces significant challenges. A key issue is the limited presence of Waray journalism in college curricula. While a few institutions, such as NwSSU and Eastern Samar State University (ESSU), include Waray in teaching students to write radio and TV broadcast scripts, such courses remain uncommon. He explained that scarce formal training limits the academic foundation for future media professionals who could champion the language. Alongside this, opportunities for media training in Waray are limited. Mr. Arinto underscored that this lack of specialized training hampers the development of journalists in producing content and reporting effectively in Waray.



Figure 17. DYVL Siday



Figure 18. Arangkada

Furthermore, Mr. Arinto highlighted that they also struggle to compete with the dominance of the Filipino language. Because Filipino is widely used in mainstream television, radio, and print, it tends to overshadow regional languages like Waray. This makes it difficult for Waray-language programs and content to gain visibility, attract audiences, and secure consistent airtime or publication space. In relation to this, Mr. Arinto emphasized that another significant challenge is the limited presence of Waray-language content across both digital and traditional media. According to him, this makes it hard to reach and engage audiences because this makes them turn to media in more widely available languages.

In conclusion, Mr. Arinto stressed the vital role of the media in promoting local languages in Eastern Visayas. He noted, however, that significant gaps remain, which must be addressed to ensure accurate coverage and to sustain audience interest in content produced in their native language.

Waray o Kinalbayog: Pinulungan nga Gingagamit sa Komunikasyon Kauswagan o Development Communication

Prof. Phil Harold L. Mercurio

Northwest Samar State University, Calbayog City, Samar

Prof. Mercurio's presentation began by providing an overview of Calbayog, highlighting its multilingual nature. Besides Waray, the city is inhabited by speakers of Cebuano, Tagalog, Inabaknon, M'ranao, and other languages. He pointed out that the local Waray variant, called "Kinalbayog," has over 186,000 speakers. Consequently, NwSSU Calbayog has incorporated the teaching of Kinalbayog into its mandate, particularly through the Development Communication (DevCom) program, which has been in place since 1999.

The Development Communication program has formally integrated the use and teaching of Waray into its curriculum through the SocSci Elec 3: Local Language course. Prof. Mercurio explained that this course is mandatory for third-year students as preparation for their internship. It is designed to strengthen their proficiency in Waray, particularly because their field focuses on research and broadcasting, and their target audience are the people of Calbayog.

In connection with this, Prof. Mercurio shared his strategies for integrating the local language in his classes. He requires his students to read news articles and passages from the Bible in Waray to enhance both their oral and comprehension skills. He also assigns them the task of creating information materials, which helps him observe recurring mistakes and areas where students need further guidance.

Prof. Mercurio presented the raw versions of his students' materials and identified common errors in their use of Waray. One example was the phrase "*Bagyo, bagyo, panano ka nabubu-o?*," which he clarified is incorrect because "*nabubu-o*" does not exist in Waray. He noted that it is actually the Filipino word "*nabubuo*" that was mistakenly modified and that the hyphenated form is not appropriate. With this, he emphasized the crucial role that development communicators play in society, noting that they serve as the bridge between government institutions and the communities they work with. Because of this responsibility, he stressed the importance of equipping Waray-speaking students with strong skills in their language.

Furthermore, Prof. Mercurio shared that their program also conducts extension work. One of their initiatives is Teatro Kauswagan, a theater group formed to encourage people to engage with the Waray language through performance rather than through lectures alone. As part of this effort, they staged plays such as “*Kabubuwason*” and “*Ladawan*,” with scripts written by his students, which gave them hands-on experience in producing creative works in the local language.

Aside from the activities and programs he discussed earlier, Prof. Mercurio also shared that he hosts his own radio program, “*Harana Kultura*.” He uses this platform not only to strengthen his skills in the local language but also to provide a practical training space for his students. He regularly invites them to participate as guests, along with local cultural figures. One example he mentioned was “Mano Totoy,” a siday (poem) writer, and one of his DevCom students, whom he invited to talk about how they apply the Waray language in their respective fields.

Prof. Mercurio shared that NwSSU is seeing an increase in enrollees in the Development Communication program, which he views as an opportunity to further strengthen the advocacy for promoting local languages in Eastern Visayas. For him, it is important to develop in the students a strong appreciation and understanding of Waray because it is their primary tool for disseminating information and empowering communities. Strengthening their proficiency, he explained, ensures that they can communicate accurately, effectively, and responsibly once they enter the field.

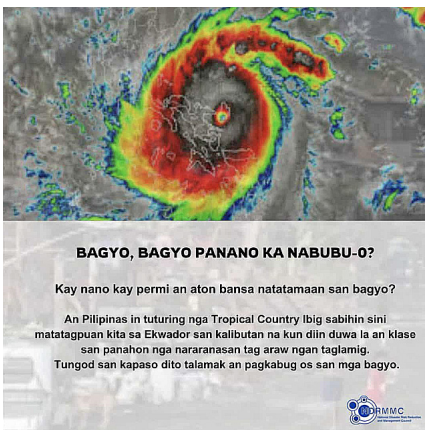


Figure 20. Information material by Prof. Mercurio's students



Figure 21. *Kabubuwason* by Teatro Kauswagan



Figure 22. Prof. Mercurio with his student and Mano Totoy at NwSSU Campus Radio 89.5 FM

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 Mr. Jason L. Padul of the Information Section of the Department of Agriculture Region VIII. He explained that their work requires regular engagement with farmers and fisherfolk, which makes it important for them to localize their materials to make them more accessible to their audiences. However, while their team uses Waray and Cebuano in developing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, he shared that they are sometimes unsure if they are doing so appropriately. He also highlighted the difficulty of translating certain farming and fishing terms into the local languages. Considering these challenges, Mr. Padul asked if there are opportunities for media practitioners like them to further their knowledge and skills in using local languages.

Mr. Arinto addressed the question by noting that this challenge is, indeed, a reality for most media practitioners. He cited the experience during Super Typhoon Yolanda, when the term “storm surge” was not effectively communicated because of translation difficulties. Given the seriousness of this gap, he shared that he already proposed the conduct of a media training program for practitioners and information officers in PIA’s 2026 plans. He expressed hope that the proposal would be approved despite existing budget constraints.

Additionally, Prof. Mercurio shared that this concern has also been raised by media practitioners in his experience as a board member of the Region VIII

Citizen Council. For this reason, the council is also planning to conduct workshops to address these issues. They have observed that media practitioners, especially younger ones, tend to commit lapses in reporting, which sometimes cause confusion among audiences. Common challenges include identifying the appropriate terminology, using correct spelling and grammar, and ensuring proper word delivery during broadcasts. In this context, Prof. Mercurio expressed his understanding of the concern raised by Mr. Padul, noting that translating farming and fishing terms is particularly difficult, and even more so when writing in a language they are not fully familiar with, such as Bisaya. He therefore expressed hope that future workshops on Waray journalism would be conducted to help practitioners use the language more effectively in their work. He also sought the support of KATIG Writers Network Inc., particularly in the presence of Ms. Ramos, proposing their involvement in future activities of the Citizen Council.

In light of the ongoing discussion, Prof. de Veyra took the opportunity to announce the Writing Workshop in Eastern Visayas Languages for Media and Communication Professionals, which will be held in January 2026 as part of Katluan, the celebration of the 30th anniversary of UPTC's Leyte Samar Heritage Center.

Following this, Mx. Jles Permejo, a BA Literature student of UPTC, raised a question based on reflections from their Waray classes. They noted that one key insight from these classes is that the lack of uniformity in Waray arises because media practitioners use the language in varied ways. As a result, Waray speakers are exposed to different usages and may be uncertain about which forms are correct. Given this, Mx. Permejo asked Mr. Arinto how broadcasters ensure that they are using Waray correctly in media, specifically inquiring whether they consult language experts or just rely on their own knowledge.

Mr. Arinto explained that, in the absence of formal education for Waray during his time, he presently relies on his experience as a native speaker when broadcasting. He also supplements this by listening to other radio programs to observe how fellow reporters use the language. He emphasized, however, that this may have helped him in his work, but there is really a need to organize formal training for media workers in using the local languages.

Moreover, Prof. Mercurio suggested creating an audio or video database of veteran journalists' reportage as a reference for younger journalists to also allow them to study how the language is properly used. He recalled how growing up listening to radio stations that broadcast in the local language helped him

adjust easily when he entered the Development Communication field. Thus, he emphasized that regular exposure to content in the local language allows individuals to gradually learn and internalize correct usage. At the same time, he stressed the importance of correcting errors made by media practitioners because audiences might otherwise assume these mistakes are standard.

Additionally, Dr. Pagliawan highlighted that the main challenge, based on the concern raised by Mr. Padul, lies in vocabulary. He advised media practitioners to read works by local writers more often to help them learn the correct terms and how to use them properly in their own work.

Finally, Ms. Rose Cablao of the Tacloban City Information Office (TCIO) shared that she faces similar difficulties as Mr. Padul, particularly since colleagues often turn to her for corrections on articles written in Waray. She highlighted that even information officers like them sometimes struggle with proper language usage. Thus, to ensure accuracy, she makes it a point to have final drafts reviewed by her team before publication. In addition to this, she also noted that as an anchor for *Oras san Tacloban*, she follows a strategy like Mr. Arinto's, observing how veteran local journalists deliver reports in Waray.

In conclusion, Ms. Cablao expressed her gratitude to the Leyte Samar Heritage Center for organizing the upcoming workshop in January, stressing that it will provide valuable support to media practitioners in strengthening their use of the local language. She hopes the workshop can accommodate many participants and believes that the challenges raised during the roundtable discussion can be addressed through collective effort to promote and preserve Waray.

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Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

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