

Curses and Religious Expressions among Selected Ethno-linguistic Groups in Central Mindanao; An Ethnographic Study

Dr. Marilyn G. Billones

Program Head, Graduate College
Cotabato State University

Abstract: This qualitative research is entitled, *Curses and Religious Expressions Among Selected Linguistic Groups in Central Mindanao: An Ethnographic Study*, on curses and religious expressions of selected ethno-linguistic groups in Central Mindanao, particularly Pikit, Aleosan, and Carmen of North Cotabato and Cotabato City and Datu Odin Sinsuat of Maguindanao. The groups being studied include the Cebuano, Ilonggo, Maguindanaon, and Teduray. The study analyzes the morphological processes, lexical relationships, and the social, cultural and psychological circumstances that cause a person to utter such expressions. It also determines how these affect communication and inter-relationships among speakers. Morphological processes noted in the ethno-languages are affixation, reduplication, borrowing, coinage, dissimulation, clippings, acronymy, and free morphemes. On the lexical relationships, synonymy is common and so with derivation. For social, cultural, and psychological circumstances, curses can be a substitute for physical harm. They are sometimes uttered without meaning or said out of anger, surprise, intense emotions, or just relieving frustrations and anger. On the other hand, religious expressions are manifestation of man's dependency of God's graces and mercy. Although, there are instances that these expressions go together as after cursing; saying religious expressions automatically follow. As curses are human nature, they can be a source of conflict but can also be a resource of peace if man can harmonize with himself, with others, with the environment, and above all with God.

Keywords: Curses, Religious Expressions, Ethno-linguistic groups, Central Mindanao.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Curses and religious expressions are common utterances among all the cultures of the world. It has evolved to become part of any given language or dialect. They are used, often involuntarily, during moments of recognition of an intense experience, be it positive or negative.

The British would say "Bloody doll!" to mean a wish that a misfortune befalls on somebody hated. The Germans would shout "Voodoo Doo!" to mean the same. The Americans would say "God damn it" to mean a wish that God would punish people hated. Klienwachter (2009) opined that there are only two intense expressions of emotion and they are opposed to each other, love and fear. All other emotions are derived from these two emotions. Such emotions as extreme fear, hate, joy, anger, pleasures and delights are the outward extremities of feelings. Although they are regarded as having a spiritual aspect, such expressions are constantly uttered by individuals who are not usually linked to a sense of spirituality, but are made against their will to articulate an instant of pure expressed feeling.

Cantalopez (1999) likewise cites the Sapir and Whorf Hypothesis, which says that language defines reality; the reality of fear apprehensions, frustrations and others. These intense emotions sometimes become uncontrollable that a speaker may resort to utterances that fall under the category of curses. However, such utterances that are made between interlocutors may affect communication and inter-relationships, whether positively or negatively. In Central Mindanao, several ethno-linguistic groups with their own distinct culture co-exist within close proximity to one another. They are

commonly known by their tribal affiliation. Among them are the Maguindanaon, the Teduray, the Cebuano and the Ilonggo. And within each ethno-linguistic grouping are variations on social outlooks, such as conservative, moderate, and/or liberal.

In the course of their interactions between individuals or groups belonging to different tribal affiliations, or even among individuals or groups that belong to the same ethno-linguistic group may have variations in social outlook. It would be noteworthy to understand how one would receive and react to a sudden utterance like a curse or a cultural expression from another who is of a different ethno-linguistic group, or has a different social outlook.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to analyze the morphological processes involved in the curses and religious expressions of selected ethno-linguistic groups in Central Mindanao. This would also analyze the lexical relationships and circumstances which would normally cause a person to utter such expressions, as well as determine how these affect communication and inter-relationships.

The study is deemed useful in the integration of values while teaching the different behavioral and linguistic disciplines, especially along the purpose of forging smooth interpersonal relationships.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the morphological processes involved in curses and religious expressions of the Maguindanaon, Teduray, Cebuano and Ilonggo languages?
2. What are the lexical relationships existing in the curses and religious expressions?
3. What are the social, cultural and psychological circumstances surrounding the utterances of curses and religious expressions?

2. THEORITICAL CONSIDERATION

Language is the most potent tool for expressing and communicating ideas, emotions and thoughts. It defines reality for the speakers. Through the lexical items and their corresponding meaning, it could be gleaned how the people adhere to certain beliefs or ideas. Certain concepts or ideas become part of the language if they exist as part of the reality in the cultural environment. The lexical items present in the language reflect the culture's particular concerns and interest, their depth of emotions and their manners of releasing them Sapir & Whorf as cited by Cantallopez, (1999).

Fillmore (1993) as cited by Cantallopez (1999), also basing on the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, proposes that to be able to understand meanings, both literal and metaphorical, there is a need to study the whole social, political, economic, religious and physical environment. A good description of a word-meaning should therefore fit into a theory about how people apply their lexical knowledge in interpreting and producing real discourse. This implies finding ways of integrating information about a word's meaning and grammatical properties both with information about related words and with our general cultural knowledge about world.

According to Fillmore, "the meaning of a word can only be understood against a background frame of experience, beliefs, or practices that 'motivate the concept that the word encodes. Fillmore sees their meanings as depending on a whole set of interconnected notions, includes knowledge about natural cycle created by daily movement of the sun across the sky".

Hence, this study is conducted for the general purpose of contributing for the better understanding of the cultures of the people of the areas comprising the locale. It is hoped that the results of the study could contribute to the bank of knowledge regarding language and the culture of the speakers.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed the ethnographic design since the aim of the study was to describe and analyze the morphological processes of the curses and religious expressions of the selected ethno-linguistic groups. It also aimed at analyzing the lexical relationships as well the social, cultural and psychological circumstances involved in the utterance of such expressions and how it affects communication and interrelationships.

The participants of the study were speakers of the four ethno-linguistic groups. They were selected from the following sectors of the communities comprising the locale: (a) children (b) youth, (c) adult women and (d) adult men. The participants that were considered are those ages ranging from two to ninety four years old.

In the choice of the specific sectors to be included as participants of the study, the purposive sampling technique was employed. To be specific, there were 20 participants from each sector or a total of 80. This exceeds the minimum requirements of ten informants for in-depth interviews according to Creswell (1998).

Since there are eight barangays comprising the locale, there were ten participants from each barangay. In this study, it is within the suggested range number of participants. All of them were included during the interview, FGD and observation. The locale of the study covers four municipalities and one city. A total of eight barangays comprise the locale of the study.

The data on the Maguindanaoan curses and religious expressions were gathered in Silik and Lagundi of Pikit, North Cotabato and RH 2 of Cotabato City. In addition, the data on Cebuano curses and religious expressions were also gathered from Ginatilan and Ladtingan in Pikit. However, the Ilongo data were gathered in Pagangan, Aleosan, and Aroman, Carmen also in North Cotabato. The Teduray data were sought in Sitio Lomboy, Barangay Awang and Pindaag Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao Province.

Key Informant interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), document analysis and participant-observation were done. I, who am conversant in the Maguindanaoan, Ilongo and Cebuano languages did participant-observation in the corresponding areas of locale. Tape recordings and transcribing were considered indispensable techniques in the gathering of data.

To gather the data on the curses and religious expressions, interviews and observations were done. The data were validated through the FGD and document analysis. To come up with the morphological processes, morphophonemic analysis was done. Lexical analysis was also done to come up with lexical relationships. The meanings of the curses and religious expressions were gathered from the speakers themselves.

Interviews were used in seeking the appropriate situations where the curses and religious expressions are used. I have done participant observations to find out whether or not the meanings identified by the informants correspond to the intentions and reactions of the co-interlocutor. These constitute the social, cultural and psychological circumstances surrounding the expressions. Intent observations were done to find out how the elders and the parents warn the children regarding the use of curses and religious expressions. Interviews were also conducted with the elders and parents on the meaning of these expressions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

I. Morphological Processes of the Curses and Religious Expressions

Morphological processes are processes undergone by words in which changes of the constituting letters or the equivalent sounds create another meaning. This is one way of looking at how language-change. The following are the transcribed data, the curses and religious expressions, lifted from the oral discourses of the respondents from the four ethno-linguistic groups namely Cebuano, Ilonggo, Maguindanaoan and Teduray.

The data were translated (some translations are literal because there are no equivalents) and analyzed based on the morphological processes involved. The raw data were categorized by the researcher into: (a) devil related, (b) behavior descriptions, (c) threat for a physical harm, and, (d) wish that something bad befall the person.

Morphological Processes of Cebuano Curses

The data shows that in the Cebuano curses, several morphological processes were evident such as affixation, reduplication, borrowing, clipping, coinage, acronyming, dissimulation, and meta-thesis.

Affixation is shown by adding syllables or suffixes at the end of the main word; for instance, in “*Yawaa ka!*” the suffix “a” is added to the word *yawa*, the English equivalent of which is devil. This is telling the second person that he or she is being considered like a devil or that of a devil. Other examples are: *panuwaya ka!*, *buanga ka!* and, *kagwanga ka!* There is also synonymy by the use of words with similar meanings such as *demonyo* and *satanas* both mean “devil” just like *yawa* and *panuway*.

The speakers were asked why they had to double the curses when probably the effect would be the same. One woman, a mother of five children whose age ranges from 2 to 6 years, said: “*Makalagot man gud kaayo Ma'am. Mga gahi kaayog ulo. Kulang pa nang panuway, yawa pa gyod. Naa pay satanas ug demonyo. Dayon Ma'am no, maarang arang man dayon ko pagkahuman nakog pamalikas*” (I'm really pissed off. They are so hard headed. “*Panuway*” is not enough. In addition, there's “*yawa*” and still, “*satanas and demonyo*”. Then *Ma'am*, you know what? I feel better afterwards.

Most borrowed terms were taken from Spanish and American origin. These expressions were still commonly used by the Cebuano speakers, e.g. the word “bullshit” which illustrates borrowing when pronounced the English way. “*Buysit*” is first, borrowed from the English “bullshit” and later, it may have become a form of dissimulation. Another possibility is that, the speakers could not pronounce it correctly. If not intended to be a curse, it should be viewed as an expletive, or a swear word and which is also similar to a curse. In the interviews, a sixty-five old woman said that her father who was a second world-war guerrilla told her that he first heard the term from the American soldiers. He said they would always shout “*buysit*” when they were angry, frightened or excited. The curse *gardemit* is also borrowed and dissimulated. The original expression is “God damn it” and which the Cebuanos found difficult to pronounce.

The word *gaba* is the equivalent of the Indian term *karma*. This is based on a Hindu Buddhist philosophy that people's state of life after death is determined by their actions while still living. One who is bad could be reincarnated to a less intelligent animals such as snakes which crawl. Crawling seems to be a difficulty, from the Cebuano point of view. This could be the reason why in one of the curses, a speaker could wish that the hated person would crawl like a snake as shown in this curse “*Maut-ot pa unta ka! Magkamang pa unta ka sa yuta!*”. Although the use of the word *karma* is a case of borrowing, it could not be ascertained whether or not the concept of *gaba* is also borrowed.

The use of taboo words is often caused by automatic expressions without meaning for some speakers but when uttered during intense emotions one might be influenced by the psychological and emotional circumstances. This means utterances of its curses vary its meaning depending on the circumstances that calls for it. A man who saw that the ducks carried by a grandson all flew away, shouted: “*Bilatsijang ubo!*” I asked what he meant by the phrase and he said that it literally means the “vagina of an old woman ancestor”. He said further that *ubo* is an indigenous Cebuano term which means “female ancestor”. *Bilatsijang ubo* is also an example of dissimulation as some sounds have been removed and the words have been combined. The syllables “*sijang*” is short cut of “*sa ijang*” which means “of her”. *Putu* is short cut of the curse “*hijo de puta*” which is “son of a bitch” in English. *Iyot* is the Cebuano and Ilongo word for “fuck” which has been a common expletive and which the researcher believes, is also a threat. There is a connotation of a threat from the speaker (most likely a man), that a woman will be raped. This could be a short cut of “*I will fuck you*” or just an expression of excitement like meeting a friend. He may say “*iyota mo da eh*” not necessarily a treat.

Among the data, there is only one case of acronyming. OK is usually understood to mean “alright” but here it is one which means “Onggoyng Kiat”. *Kiat* refers to a woman whose actions always intend to seduce. Onggoy is the Cebuano equivalent of monkey. A woman is compared to an onggoy (monkey).

Another morphological processes that is involved is metathesis which signifies the transposition of sounds thus creating a new word, say for example “*Batanas*” is a metathesis of “*batasan*” which means manner or character. It could be a show of being pissed off, but only slightly, such that there is a need to use metathesis. There is constraint in the speaker as shown in the use of metathesis.

In the expletives or curses expressing threat, the researcher observes affixation as prevalent and a direct threat or confrontation by the use of the second person, such as “*pamatyon ta mong tanan karon!*” The original form is *patay* which means to kill. *Pamatyon* accommodates the infix *ma* and the suffix *on* which connotes an intention to do the action. In this case, killing. In “*ipakidnap ta mo sa Moros!*”, the threat is not for the speaker to do the action but by the “*Moros*”. When *ipa* is used as a suffix, there is an intention of letting somebody else perform the action. This is similar to the Tagalog *ipa* as in; *ipakulong*, *ipapatay*, and others. *Tigbason* uses the suffix *on* which connotes that an action would be done by the speaker. *Tigbas* means to slash with a Bolo.

Morphological Processes of Ilonggo Curses

Like the Cebuano curses and expressions, the Ilongos' could be categorized into three; those that attributes bad characteristics to someone, those that express threat for physical harm and those that express wishes that something bad befalls someone. The most common morphological process is that of affixation. There are also cases of reduplication, borrowing, coinage and dissimulation.

The most prevalent, as observed in the daily exchanges among Ilongo data, is the expletive “*linti*” which means lightning. Almost everyone, including the schoolchildren, would utter this. An Ilongo elder was asked why there is the prevalence of this expletive. He said this “*Kung maigo ang tawo sang linti, baw di gid sya maitisura. Mag-itom iya guya kag ang unod ya daw lata lang.*” (If one is struck by lightning, his body would be defaced. His face would turn black and the flesh like tin.

Borrowing was observed, such as “*demonyo*”, and *satanas*. They are both borrowed from Spanish. Other borrowed terms are *shit*, *animal*, and *traydor*. The word “*hanginera*” is a coined word from “*hangin*” which is used to mean boastful, and the suffix “*-era*” which is usually used in the Spanish language. With the newly formed word it becomes a doer of an action as specified by the root word.

A woman who would always shout *demonyo* to her children was asked if her children had demonic behaviors. She explained that it had become customary, and she could not even remember where or from whom did she get it. Shouting or uttering the word has become automatic for her. She said her children would sometimes disobey her but generally, they are good-natured children. She added that when she utters the word with great emphasis and exaggeration, it would mean nothing and has nothing to do with the real meaning of the word.

Labelling by way of telling a person that he or she is stupid is also commonly observed as “*gago*”, *gaga*, *mango*, and their reduplications *gagu-gago* and *gaga-gaga*, *mangu-mango gid*, and dissimilation such as *gagir*.

Taboo words are common such as *bilat* or *putay* (female sex organ), and *buto* (male sex organ). They have also been used to threaten such as *Basi ikantot ta ka*, or *Basi iitot ta ka*. These threats use the prefix *-i* added to root words *kantot* and *itot* which both mean fuck you.

The other curses which threaten to kill (*kanami patyon sa imo*), to slash you with a bolo, (*Basi ilabo ta karon*), and, to strike you with my fingers (*pitikon ko nang bunganga mo*), but others are more harsh, such as; to cut off the neck (*Basi mapuli ka nga waay ulo*), or to bury a person alive (*Basi ilubong ta nga buhi*). *Labo*, and *lubong* are nouns which become verbs with the prefix “*i*” as in *ilabo* and *ilubong*. The word *basi* means a supposition but still used as a threat when added before verbs specifying violent actions. It means that there is an intention to do the action. *Basi ilubong ta nga buhi* carries the connotation of doing the action and which does not include determination to do the action as a gesture of still giving a warning for the person to stop or to behave. As a hypothetical example, the complete statement could have been said this way: “Stop or I will bury you alive”.

The suffix *-on* could be observed in the threats such as “*Tampaun ta ka karon!*” (I might slap you!), *Patyon ta ka karon!* (I might kill you!) *Utdon ko nang buto mo* (I might cut your dick!) *Gulgulon ko nang liog mo!* And others. The prefix *-un* is added to the root words and this would mean there is an intention to do the action of slapping, killing, and cutting. The word “*gulgulon*” is similar to cutting but it is a little bit slower like cutting the head when butchering chicken where you use the knife in a back and forth fashion. It should be done slowly to facilitate the flowing of the blood to a container.

The wish that something bad will happen could be expressed in ways using original Ilongo language expressions such as *mapatay ka pa tani*, *makarma ka pa tani*, *madusmo ka pa daad*, and *mabuta ka pa tani*. All mean they are wishes that the other person dies, slides or falls, experiences karma or becomes blind. Affixation is common to all. The suffix *-ma* suggests that the person wishes what the person spoken to would become. But the root word means *buta* for instance which means blind like *Mabuta ka pa tani* expresses wish that the person would become blind. It is the word “*tani*” that conveys that there is a wish.

Morphological Processes of Maguindanaon Curses

The data shows the morphological processes undergone by the curses of the Maguindanaoans. Many of the morphological processes of the Maguindanaoan language are affixation and reduplication. Borrowing is also common. Like the Cebuano and Ilongo languages, speakers also label those they are uncomfortable with, those that they are angry with or those who may have harmed them. They may call them *baboy* (pig) or *bab'l* which may also be an equivalent of “*gago*”. To be labelled *senile* is already a curse for them. It is even more surprising to know that being a child of war could be a curse. Somebody who is voracious is also vehemently objectionable. In maguindanaoan language, voracious is *busaw*. The whole word is said and has not undergone any morphological change.

There are also curses that express a wish that something bad befalls the person with whom one is angry with or simply uncomfortable with. Most often, these would wish that a person be dead. However, there are unique ones, such as the curse “wishing that the abdomen of the person’s burst”.

Borrowing was also observed. Curses borrowed were *busit* and *tarantado*. In Pikit and Cotabato City, one cannot find anymore an all-Maguindanaoan community. These could have been borrowed from neighboring speakers.

Reduplication was also observed. Reduplicated expressions were “*buneg-buneg*” and “*tanga-tanga*”. The speakers explained that when a word is reduplicated, there is less of the quality of whatever it meant by the root word. For instance, *tanga-tanga* is not really *tanga* but lesser in degree.

In most of these, affixation by the use of prefixes and suffixes is done. The use of infixes is uncommon. In the phrases *kamurkhan ka* and *pabpatay*, *-ka* and *-pab* are prefixes which means there is a wish that the action indicated would happen. There is a wish that someone dies or someone be killed. The prefix *mami* when added to a root word intensifies the wish or intention that the action happens. For instance, the curse “*Matay ka den*” simply means you’re dead. When added to *patay* with *p* assimilated into the sound of *m*, making it “*maminatay or malamatay*”, the expression of the curse or the fervent desire that the person dies, intensifies.

The Maguindanaoan word “*buto*” means to explode or to burst, similar to the meaning of *buto* in Cebuano which also means to explode. When the prefix *-mim* is added to form *mimbuto*, there is a slight change in the meaning. *Mimbuto pay tiyan nang ka!* means “May your abdomen explode!”

Morphological Processes of Teduray Curses

The curses of the Teduray are similar to those of the three other ethnic groups. It also uses “pig” as a curse. *Baboyen go* which means “You’re a pig” is *Baboy ka!* in Maguindanaoan. Pig is indeed objectionable to them that it has been made a curse.

Buneg has been borrowed from the Maguindanaoans. The elders who were interviewed said that the curse *baboy ka* may have originated from them. Affixation and reduplication are common morphological processes. *Malahugadamen* has the prefix *-mala* and suffix *-men*, which when found in one word would mean that the co-interlocutor is like or behaves like what is referred to by the root word.

Aside from borrowing, affixation and reduplication, there were also clipping and dissimulation involved in the curses of the Teduray. Clipping were done for some words like “*emow*” to “*mow*” and “*dailan* or *daylan*” which is a clip from “*endailan*”. Dissimulation also was observed in the word “*meleho*” which originated from “*melefo*”. Lefo is the original word which means death or dead.

Moreover, I have noticed that there were still words which haven’t undergone morphological processes, they retain the original word such as *tete*, *furah*, *tafes*, *kedut*, *kebeng*, *fiyo*. *Tete* means bad while *fiyo* means good.

Morphological Processes of Cebuano Religious Expressions

The common religious expressions mention God and the saints. There is also abundant mention of Virgin Mary in different names and attributions. There are three unique data; one that mentions Virgin Mary wearing a fatigue chemise which was said by a soldier, another one which curses by threatening to chop the addressee into pieces, and the third, which mentions *sigbin* which is a fictitious character in Cebuano, myths and fables. To some informants *sigbin* is a vixen look alike while other informants describe it as a monster like creature or animal with short front legs.

Affixation is also observed, such as the use of suffix *_ng* added to a root word to shorten by assimilating the article in between. Clipping is also observed such as the word “*Susmaryosip*” which cuts the three words; Jesus, Maria and Josep, the members of the Holy Family.

Borrowing from Spanish is common, such as *santisima* which is a diminutive of *santa*. The Spanish *patron* is also *patron* in English but it is unlikely that the borrowing is from the former.

Ginoo is a Cebuano term which means God. This religious expression has not undergone morphological processes (free morpheme) which is commonly uttered by the Cebuanos. Acronyming was also observed in the religious expression “OMG” which means Oh My God. The term is also borrowed from English.

Morphological Processes of Ilonggo Religious Expressions

Ginoo or *Diyos ko*, both meaning God is very prevalent among the religious expressions of the Ilongo. The morphological processes involved are affixation, clipping, borrowing and reduplication. Like the Cebuanos, the Ilonggos borrowed also from Spanish words like “*santisima*” and the names of the patron saints like Santa Barbara, Hesus, Maria, Hosip

Reduplication were also observed like Hesus, Hesus and Ginoo ko, Ginoo ko!. The words were uttered twice to indicate that there is an intense emotion involved during the utterance of such religious expressions. At times it can be said when something fall or when something unexpected occur.

Affixation were also observed in the expressions “Ay abaw Ginoo, kaloy-an man”, “mayad kaloy-an sang Ginoo” and “mayad kaloy-an sang maayo nga lawas.” *Kaloy-an* is a word which contain prefix -ka ang a suffix -an added to the root word *looy* meaning pity. In many cases, the speakers would ask help, graces and mercy from God Almighty. *Ginoo ko* or *Diyos kaloy-an kami* can also imply asking for good health.

Clipping is also observed in the Ilonggo expressions “Sus Maria Hosip” which connotes the blessed family Jesus, Mary and Joseph may mean an expression of surprise.

Morphological Processes of Maguindanaon Religious Expressions

All throughout the day, during the immersion, I would hear repeatedly, Arabic religious expressions uttered by adult and elderly participants. These are expressions found in the Koran and no changes were done to the words. An informant said that the expression “*Bismillah*” which means “*In the Name of Allah*” is considered as the shortest prayer and often used to begin something. He said further that doing something, always begin a step with the right foot and left in leaving except in going or entering the comfort room. They considered comfort rooms as one of the dirtiest places. The religious expressions “*Walla hu Akbar*” which means Allah is the greatest; “*Astag fir Allah*” means Allah, please forgive me. These expressions were used when somebody is committing minor sin. “*Alhamdulillah*” is an Arabic word which means praise to Allah. This expression is commonly used to begin a talk which shows gratefulness to Allah or God.

Another common religious expression observed is “*Insha Allah*” which means Allah wills. They believed that everything happens if Allah permits. As observed during the immersion, the expressions “*Assalamu Alaykum*” means peace and glory be upon you and “*Alaykum i salam*” is a greeting in response to the former which means “and upon you, may there be peace”. “*Subhanallah*” which means “Glory be to Allah” is a religious expression appreciating and praising God. “*Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajiun*” a religious expression uttered when someone heard that somebody is dead which means “To God we came from to God we shall return”.

One informant who studied Arabic said that the best religious expressions uttered by a muslim are the ninety nine names of Allah. She enumerated and I listed the names such as *Ar Rahman*, *Ar Rahim*, *Al Malik*, *Al Quddus*, *Ar Salam*, *Al-Mu'min*, *Al-Muhaymin*, *Al-Aziz*, *Al-Jabbar* and etc. to name some. But during observation period, I haven't heard the words except Allah and Ya Rabbi. In an interview, one informant a mother and a wife said that she heard Ya Rabbi from an elder. Further she added that the term is a religious expression similar to Cebuano which is Dios or God.

There were also expressions heard such as “*Alala*, *ala*, *ababa*, *aba*; *Alakaula*; *Alastanggay*”. One informant said that these expressions are corruption from the Arabic term. “*Alala*” is an expression of surprise taken from Arabic term “*Lailah ha illallah*” which is synonymous to “*Ala*”, “*Aba*” and “*Ababa*”. “*Alakaula*” is an expression taken from “*Lakhaula wala kuwata illah bil lahil alim*” and “*Alastangay*” is a taken from “*Astag fir Allah*”. These words have undergone the process of dissimulation.

The expression, *Oh my gosh!* was heard from a five-year old kid of one of the participants. The boy would always shout this several times a day especially when he was amazed.

Morphological Processes of Teduray Religious Expressions

Affixation has been observed to be of common occurrence. There are a few cases of borrowing. The suffix *-an* denotes an action that would be done either to the speakers or their interlocutors. This could be found in the words *fegedawan* and *getamanan* which means pity and fortune respectively. The suffixes *-on* and *-a* are also evident in the expressions “*Tulus go tabangon gey*” “*Tulus sedi da tabanga mo begey*”. The expressions were synonymous to “*Ala tala tabanga mo ide etew*” meaning Almighty God, Please help your people!. “*Tulus* and *Ala tala*” are two synonymous terms which means God. Culturally, “*Ala tala*” which mean Almighty God is a religious expression usually used by a kefedewan, a person who has the capacity to do the ritual.

Lalaugan means Almighty but speakers should be careful, lest, a phonetic error committed could be disastrous. *Linalagon* which has similar sounds, means bastard.

In an interview, one informant said that some of their religious expression were adopted from Christian prayer. This is noticeable in the religious expression “*demasal tom*” meaning “let us pray”. In this case, the morphological process involved is borrowing. Jesus and Mary are also heard because many of the participants have been converted to Christianity specifically, to the Episcopal Church. St. John was also especially mentioned, reflective of a belief in saints.

II. Lexical Relationships of the Curses and Religious Expressions

This is a culturally recognized pattern of association that exists between lexical units in a language. This section identifies the lexical relationships common to the curses and religious expressions.

Synonymy is the use of words with similar meanings. The speakers would mention curses in different words but similar in meaning. *Animal ka* and *hayop ka* were said at the same time. *Mangu* and *bulok* both mean dull or “of lesser intelligence”. In the phrase *gago nga tonto ni ay*, *gago* means the same with *tonto*. *Ginoo ko* is also synonymous with *Diyos ko*. The other pairs are; *yawa* and *panuway*, *bilat* and *putay*, *buligi* and *tabangi*, *bigaon* and *karagan*, *way pulos* and *inutil*, *demonyo* and *satanas*, and *barakkalah feyk* and *Inshaallah*, and *subhanallahi (Glory of Allah)* and *Alla-hu akbar (Allah is Great)*.

While synonymy is common among Cebuano and Ilongo curses, it is observed among Maguindanaoan religious expressions. These expressions are in Arabic language. No religious expression in Maguindanaoan was heard except for the corruption of Arabic religious expressions. It could be noted that synonymy is commonly observed among the Cebuano and Ilongo curses. There are a few pairs among the Cebuano and Ilongo religious expressions. In the Teduray and Maguindanaoan curse and religious expressions on the other hand, are uncommon.

Derivation is also common among the Cebuano and Ilongo curses and religious expressions. Some pairs are; *pisti-pistot*, *buang-buangit*, *gaga-gagir*, *demonyo-demongking*, and *diputa-dipunggol*.

III. Social, Cultural and Psychological Circumstances Surrounding the Utterances of Curses and Religious Expressions

Curses do not just happen. There were circumstances that push people to utter them spontaneously and these become are part of their lexicon.

Cebuano

A Cebuano elder explained that some of the Cebuano curses have religious implications such as the idea of satan being of the worst behavior as it entices people to do bad things such as crimes or violations to the laws of God. Our literatures would tell us that the Spaniards who brought Christianity to the Philippines were quick in shouting *Demonyo! Que barbaridad!*

One Cebuano participant shared that she had witnessed a fight between one who cursed (A) and the other who was cursed (B). They both ended in the desk of the barangay chairman. The verbal wrangling escalated as the cursing worsened even if both of them were already in front of the local government official. The parents became involved later when B told A that she became a cursing person because the parents are

also fond of cursing, and that they (the parents) could not ask her to stop cursing because they do not have the moral ascendancy. The participant finally said; *Mahadlok man gyod ko mamalikas uy. Sauna bata pa mi, panglusi-on man gyud mi sa among inahan nga tua na intawon sa laing kalibutan, kung mamalikas mi. Mag-away gani mi sa akong magulang, modagan gyud usa ko sa layu ayha moingon paghinay nga “daku kag bilat” pero muna-muna na nakong kahadlok basig madunggan ko sa Ginoo.* (I was really afraid to curse. When I was still young, our mother (who had gone to the other world/deceased) would pinch us whenever we cursed. If my older sister and I would quarrel, I would run fast and away, then I would whisper “*dakog bilat*” but I was so afraid God would hear me).

To me, it is very surprising that mothers could curse their children or shout very violent expletives at them such as *Pamatyon ta mong tanan karon!* (I can kill all of you!). This is a case of verbal violence. The mother who did this was asked if she did this very often. She said she only uttered this when so angry. When asked what could make her very angry, she cited an example. *Masuko gyud ko anang gikan ko sa trabaho unya wa pay nilung-ag. Ako ra man guy gakayod Ma'am kay balo na man ko. Ah basta paninggitan ko na silang tanan nga pamatyon ta mong tanan!* (I would be so angry coming home with no rice being cooked. I raise my children alone because I am already a widow. I would shout at them to threaten that I would kill all of them).

A mother who was busy washing clothes was upset by her three children who bothered her; the three month-old baby was crying and her two-year old girl was playing with water. The eldest came to tell her that the infant might be hungry. The mother turned to the son and shouted at him, calling him *gago*. She also shouted at her daughter who was playing with water. This, I was shocked when the two-year old girl shouted back; *Gago! Gago!*

When asked how come the two-year old daughter could already curse *gago*, the mother said that probably she got it from her. She explained that she would sometimes beat her with a slipper but the more she is beaten, the more she curses, then she would go wild like a drunken man (*Magmaoy siya.*)

I saw a trend of mothers cursing. Cantallopez (1999) mentioned about the Tigwa Manobo mothers cursing their children early in the morning. This was her way of getting attention and obedience from them. The elder who served as one of key informants told her that the lack of power of the mother stems from the practice of the husband rousing her early in the morning and giving her instructions what to do.

Another elder shared that when one says *giatay* (a kind of disease), probably there is no deliberate intention of cursing. But when the exclamation is "*Pang-atayon unta mong tanan* (hope you can be inflicted with this disease), there is already a connotation of so much anger and the strong desire to harm through verbal violence.

Ilonggo

Noticeable are the Ilongo curses that are sex-related such as; *Yo deputa* (clipping from *hijo de puta* meaning son of a bitch) and *yuga ko di* (origin is *iyota ko di* which is an invitation to fuck the speaker). Based on the explanations of the informants, most of the time, this mean nothing. For example, when "*yuga*" is said by a male to another male, it is absurd when it is an invitation to fuck.

Among the Ilongos observed, the expression "*linti*" was common. An elder revealed that it simply means lightning. But when one utters "*Lintian ka tani*" it carries so much anger. There is actually a wish that the other person be stricken by lightning. Then he said that the corpse of one stricken by lightning could turn black and the flesh hard like tin.

Teduray

The occasions and intentions with which the teduray curses are said to be similar to the Cebuano and Ilongo. However, there is a striking observation which manifests protest on greed. The frequency of saying "*busaw and busawen*" was high. A "*busaw*" is even associated with a witch or a monster. An informant shared that to the Teduray greed is a mortal sin. The group has not yet adopted mass production technology and the people still depend so much on what the family plant for themselves and what small products they could sell for the education of the children. Use of resources therefore is very critical. If one monopolizes, he or she becomes greedy, and therefore deprives others. For this teduray people, this is very detestable.

The Teduray are either christianized or islamized. Those observed were mostly christianized. However, because of long association with the Maguindanaons, they have borrowed not only cultural practices, but also their curses. There could be a difference in the way they accept curses. *The Maguindanaoan* curse *baboy ka*, when said by a Teduray, it does not really have an impact on the addressee but when said by a Maguindanaoan to a fellow Maguindanaoan, this could be deadly and could even cause a clan war.

Maguindanaoan

To a Maguindanaoan, a pig is a very dirty and very detestable animal. Eating pork is strictly prohibited. "*Baboy ka* is a curse of both the Teduray and the Maguindanaoan. When a Maguindanaoan curses by calling one a "*baboy*", this means, the anger has already intensified and so this serves as a warning to the co-interlocutor. The Teduray informants said they got this from the neighbor Maguindanaoan. But when a teduray curses saying "*baboy*" the anger is not as intense as that of the Maguindanaoan. Instead, he or she compares the person to a very ugly, dirty, and very detestable creature or animal.

On the religious expressions, an elder was asked what were his religious expressions. He was quick to enumerate; *Santa Maria*; *Santa Mariang Birhen*; *Hesus Maria Hosep*, (blessed family); *sampit sa mahal nga patron, murag tanan nga mga santos* (seek help from the patron saint and probably all saints). "*Mao pod na ako sekreto ngano taas ako kinabuhi*" (This is my secret of long life).

As observed during the immersion, and as revealed by the participants, cursing occurred as automatic expletives or exclamation, as threat and as expressing a fervent wish that something bad befalls a person. Most of the curses are violent and unimaginable. A Maguindanaoan curse for example, wishes that one's abdomen would burst. A Cebuano curse wishes that the person be stricken with cholera, a very deadly disease.

Many of the ones who curse explained that through cursing, they are relieved of too much frustration or anger. The only repercussion is that, others retaliate not by cursing but by doing physical harm. The others do curse in return but when the curse would involve their parents or relatives, that is where physical violence ensue. One participant told a story of how he was enraged by the curse "*bilat ina mo*". What he did was to go home and get a gun. The one who cursed also did the same. But before both of them could shoot each other, many people had already come to calm them down.

Like the curses, the religious expressions were also common among the four ethno-linguistic groups. It is the Maguindanaoans who were observed to mention the religious expressions in everything they do. Upon waking up in the morning, they would express gratitude and praise to Allah for his kindness and mercy. Upon embarking on something, they utter the expression "*Bismillah*" which means nothing could happen if it is not the will of God. For anything that they have completed doing, or for anything they have done successfully, they would say *Alhamdulillah* which means that Allah should be praised for His Greatness or *La ila ha illa llah and wala-ila ha illa llah*, meaning, no one deserves worship except Allah. When one is frustrated, or experiences something bad, he says; "*Al'hamdulillah-hi 'Ala kulli'ha-l'*".

The Cebuanos and Ilongos also reflect a religious character, a recognition of the greatness and the mercifulness of God by their religious expressions. Usually, through their religious expressions, these are automatic praise and plea for God's mercy.

The Cebuanos would call for many saints at the same time, as if the power or grace will be doubled if they mention many of the saints' names such as, Santa Barabara, Santa Trinidad and others or Mother Mary, Santa Maria. I have found out that most saints called were female. The participants explained that probably, it is the women's nature of being kind and nurturing like Virgin Mary that made them automatically call for these female saints. Like children, they channel their request through the mother first, before the father. They said most likely it is the mother who responds quickly.

The curses and religious expressions then of the four ethno-linguistic groups are generally similar and are said not in the real sense of the words or phrases but they are used automatically without respect to the authentic meaning; except the Islamic religious expressions which are intended for special occasions and which are mandated by the religion itself. But most of these are borrowed from the Arabic language.

5. CONCLUSION

As observed, the curses of the different ethnic communities seem to have been similar. This could be due to psychic unity or the similarity of expressions descriptive of experiences and of thoughts of the different peoples of different environments and experiences, the world over. All these are expressed or made part of the language.

A similar thing would be the matter of people's technology that could be fashioned in the same way even if these people are hemispheres apart. I would like to use as specific examples the ancient tools because these were fashioned with the innate minds and capacities. The knives of people in ancient Africa may be the same as the knives of the ancient Filipinos. It is the availability of the same materials and the similarity of purpose that made possible the sameness.

In like manner, the lexicon of a language which has been formed out of a specific need may be fashioned in the same manner. The expression of anger, for example, calls for harshness because that may be the only way with which a person could get even, may he or she belongs to different races.

In extreme cases, the curses could metaphorically kill. While I was listening to the curses and at the same time observing the reactions of the addressee, I could see downheartedness, to say the least. There was frustration, pain and equal anger. In some cases, they are just automatic expressions without meaning at all.

But in most of the situations observed, there was no beating by the one who cursed, although there were instances of fights that ensued. The curses seemed to be the substitute for physical harm that the speaker could inflict to the other person. Because of this, one could be tempted to think that violence is part of human nature. However, I was too keen in observing whether that was the general rule or was it the exception. For this, I could say that the practice was not that prevalent. The practice of cursing is prevalent as was observed in the different ethnic communities.

Also, I could see that it is the women and the children who are most likely the victims as they are the receiver of the curse. Is it because, they are the most vulnerable sectors in the society? Many curses are affront to the humanity and dignity of the women. The children, because of their physical weakness and because they have been taught that fighting against parents is against the law of God, are easy victims.

The study also shows that while people curse, they are also fond of religious expressions. There were even cases of the participants cursing then afterward, uttering religious expressions.

In addition, it is noticeable that the religious expressions show people's dependence on God, their full belief in His power to make things happen. However, there were instances when the religious expressions were uttered without meaning or clear or meditated intentions.

Implications

On the study of language and linguistics, there is still a dearth of information regarding the ethno-languages in the Philippines. A better understanding of these could contribute to the enhancement of the study and functions of Linguistics in the academe. This study may therefore add to the existing bank of knowledge.

Another implication for practice is on interpersonal relationships and on values formation. I could see how harsh the curses were and how painful they were to the addressee. They were also invitations for conflict, reason why physical and verbal wrangling result. But curses can also be a resource for peace if man can harmonize with himself, with others, with the environment, and above all with God.

All aspects of conflict have not been explored yet. This study shows one dimension, and it shows how it could escalate. The conditions of unpeace are still prevailing in the Cotabato area. This is where everyone should be very careful not to antagonize or spark conflict against each other. No matter how simple the curse; there is always a chance of escalating.

Religiosity could still characterize the speakers of the different ethnic groups involved in the study. This could be a source for peacemaking if man Probably, what is lacking is a redirection of the educational mechanisms, be they formal or informal.

Language is a right but people cannot just use the lexicon of their language anytime and anywhere they thought they could use, even unconsciously. Like freedom, it is not an absolute right, for always, one's right ends when the rights of others begin. When one is cursed, one's dignity is challenged.

Implications for Practice

The more important implication is closer to teaching than anything else. If schools are the most potential tool for social transformation, this study may be of use to curriculum developers, to accommodate the aspect of "civilizing" language especially that nowadays, the current interest is the use of the vernaculars as medium of instruction in the formative years.

In addition, there is a need for further studies on the people's thoughts and aspirations. The curses and religious expressions are simple manifestations of daily occurrences among people. There could be some deeper meaning of these expressions which can be a potential subject for research.

There is also a need to study what have been their difficulties in life as manifested by their lexicon. This should include an exploration into their current social, physical, economic and political environments that may have exacerbated their need to express through words their frustrations or difficulties.

Many ethnographic studies were conducted decades ago and the descriptions of the people may have already changed. If there were recent ones, they were sociological, meaning, only a portion of their lives have been studied.

The need for these studies is urgent especially that the current environmental degradation either makes them helpless victims or abusers or contributors to such.

All these are expressed in their language. As language is the key to their thoughts, it is also the most potential tool for transforming societies toward a peaceful, a more beautiful world.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results, I recommend the following:

First, that school administrators revisit the school curricula and look for opportunities to integrate the lesson on verbal nonviolence. This calls for a retooling of teachers or reminding them of a very special concern but which could help the school forge friendliness and generally, peace, in the school community and the larger society. This could also add another opportunity for the school to function more as agent for social transformation.

Second, that religious education includes as one of its concern, the way some speakers use names and expressions about God in vain, or for them to strengthen religious instruction, taking into consideration, daily expressions that show proper worship or piety.

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