

# **An Ethnolinguistic Vitality Study of the *Hanunoo Mangyan* Language**

## **Abstract**

This paper examines the ethnolinguistic vitality of the *Hanunoo Mangyan* language in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. This study argues that cultural identity and social interaction can either make or break language use. This means that individuals with strong identity affiliation will likely have higher minority language literacy. However, social interaction outside the community will somehow impact language use and even identity pride. Results of the survey indicate that the *Hanunoo Mangyan* language is still safe as it is still widely spoken in the communities. The language serves as a source of identity and a sense of pride, which primarily is the driving force for the language to survive. Although, one must not discount the fact that the communities in the study are gearing towards multilingual parity as their members make use of several languages in different social encounters. This clearly poses language attrition when language preservation is not given a priority.

*Key words: Surat Mangyan, Hanunoo Mangyan, Mangyan, Ethnolinguistic Vitality, Language Preservation*

## **Introduction**

*Hanunoo* (also spelled as *Hanunuo* in some literature) is one the ethnic groups of the *Mangyan* population in the island of Mindoro, Philippines (Dichoso, 1968; Postma, 1965). The Mangyan peoples are comprised of several ethnic groups referred to as *Alangan*, *Bangon*, *Buhid*, *Hanunoo*, *Iraya*, *Ratagnon*, *Tadyawan* (*Tadjawan* in Schult 2001), and *Tawbuid* (*Taobuid* in Schult, 2001). Historically, the Hanunoo Mangyan population inhabited the southern part of the Mindoro Island (Conklin, 1957). With 13,000 remaining speakers as of 2000, the Hanunoo Mangyan language is widely spoken in the towns of Mansalay and Bulalacao.

The Hanunoo Mangyan is a unique ethnolinguistic group in the Philippines as it has its own system of writing popularly known as the *Surat Mangyan*. Their system of writing is said to have descended from the ancient *Sanskrit* alphabet. There are 18 characters in the syllabary, three of which are vowels; the remaining 15 are written in combination with the vowels (Omniglot, <http://www.omniglot.com>; Ethnologue, [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)). However, such writing system is no longer being used in the day-to-day encounters of the Hanunoo Mangyan population.

This paper is based on a language vitality survey, which was designed to know the prospects of the Hanunoo Mangyan language. The main purpose of the survey was to ascertain the extent of use of the language formally and informally in the community and to know the level of literacy of the Hanunoo Mangyan in terms of reading, writing, and speaking. Specifically, the survey aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Is the Hanunoo Mangyan language still widely spoken in the community?
2. Is the system of writing still being used among members of the community?
3. What is the level of ethnic identification of the Hanunoo Mangyan and how their level of ethnic identification relates to their attitudes towards the language?
4. Does attitude towards the Hanunoo language and ethnic identify affiliation predict knowledge on the Surat Mangyan system of writing?

The said survey is part of a larger project, which was aimed to document the Hanunoo Mangyan language through an e-dictionary application software. Unlike existing printed dictionaries of the language, the said e-dictionary included not only the Hanunoo words but also their Filipino and English translations and its *Surat Mangyan* orthographical transcription.

### **The Hanunoo Language**

Hanunoo is one of the languages of the Mangyan ethnic groups in Mindoro. Other languages include *Alangan*, *Iraya*, *Buhid* and *Tadyawan* (Zorc, 1974). It is classified as an Austronesian language, a sub-classification of Malayo-Polynesian, further sub-classified as Greater Central Philippine language (South Mangyan) (Ethnologue, [www. ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com); Blust,1991). The Hanunoo Mangyan language was examined to be closer to the Buhid Language than the other Mangyan languages.

Zorc (1974) suggests that there seems to be no strong lexical evidence for the argument that all of these Mangyan languages may be direct and sole descendants of a single meso-language. He found that there is a strong lexico-statistical evidence of an alignment of Hanunoo with the Palawan languages. Moreover, Zorc (1974) and Himes (2012) both agree that most of the linguistic features of the general Mangyan languages have roots throughout the Palawan-Mindoro-Pampango areas.

Several studies have been conducted about the Hanunoo language. Studies on the Hanunoo vocabulary (Scannel, 2015) and Hanunoo and English (Conklin, 1953, 1955, 1962) have been conducted and dictionaries have been produced. As regards orthography, Gardner in 1940, found several hundred inscribed bamboos from the Mangyans of Mindoro bearing their writing system. The bamboo inscriptions narrated the everyday Mangyan life. A total of 7,000 lexical items were retrieved from these bamboo writings (Gardner, 1940).

In addition, Conklin in 1949 found that the most common feature of the script is for recording *ambahan* and *urikai* chants. These chants are metaphorical love songs. The bamboo inscriptions consist of loan words from *Tagalog*, *Hiligaynon* (Panay dialect of Bisaya), and especially *Cuyonon* (language of the people of Cuyo Island) (Conklin 1949). The Hanunoo writing system has also been listed in the World's Writing System in 1996 as indexed by Daniels and Bright (1996).

Similarly, translation studies such as that of MacLochlainn (2015) examined the Bible translation practices and underlying Christian principles regarding commensurability in linguistic forms specifically in three Mangyan languages where the Holy Scripture were translated. Finally, studies on Hanunoo culture in relation to its language have been done (Conklin,1955,1962; Llamzon,1978; Luquin, 2006).

The paper of Pitogo (2015) reported that the use of the *Surat Mangyan* is still very vibrant which to the researchers is something worth noticing. In his words, he wrote “to date, Surat-Mangyan in its enhanced form is very much alive and used in their schools and everyday life” (p.2). Pitogo also mentioned that there is a compelling evidence of widespread use of the Surat Mangyan due to informal and formal teaching and learning of the language. Looking at historical record, Postma (1974) noted that only about 70% of the Hanunoo-Mangyan “practiced and knew their script.” This paper therefore aims to examine the vitality of the Hanunoo Mangyan not only in terms of oral but also written language.

## **Identity, Language, and Social Interaction**

Language use and language survival can be influenced by one’s identity affiliation and extent of interaction within and beyond the community of language speakers. Language is reciprocally related to identity. In fact, Miller (2010) maintains that “language is commonly understood as a primary resource for enacting social identity and displaying membership of social groups” (p. 69). A much earlier work of Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982) argues that language is a medium by which social identity and ethnicity are “established and maintained.” The work of Bucholtz and Hall (2005) defines identity as “the social positioning of self and other” (p.586). In the positioning of one’s self relative to others (both within and outside the group) is reinforced through use of ethnic or minority language which sometimes is a show of resistance.

Although in the context of immigrant minority language, the study of Cho (2000) demonstrated that children who have developed a “heritage language” (minority language) developed strong ethnic identity affiliation to their ethnicity. Given this backdrop, this study then argues that the nexus of identity and language becomes complicated when members of minority groups start to interact with the mainstream culture. When social interactions outside of the community becomes heavy, use of minority language may diminish.

## **Research Framework**

The study is anchored on the *Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV) theory* of Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) which states that the continued existence of an ethnic group in an active, collective, and heterogeneous community can be determined by certain sociocultural factors. To Giles and Johnson (1987), the more sociocultural factors a group has in its favor, the more vitality it has and the more likely it is to survive and thrive as a vibrant collective entity within a heterogeneous context (cited in Borman & Appelgryn, 1997).

To Fishman (1972), the more speakers of a language variety and the higher their status, the greater the vitality of the group’s language and the greater its chance for survival (cited in Evans, 1996). Since language changes with space and time (Meyerhoff, 2011), linguistic shifts and variations should constantly be documented.

Drawing on from the works of Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor, this study specifically looks at the nexus between ethnic identity affiliation and attitude towards the language. This paper argues that strong identity affiliation encourages positive attitude towards the language. Conceptually, this paper also would like to put forward the assumption that strong ethnic identity affiliation and positive attitude

towards the language will affect the level of knowledge of community of speakers regarding their language. In this study's context, this paper argues that individuals with strong identity affiliation and positive attitude towards the language will likely be able to read and write an old system of writing that has already been forgotten through the years.

## Methodology and Research Locale

Language vitality is a field in sociolinguistic research, which aims to assess the extent of use of a language of an ethnolinguistic community (liveliness of a language). There are different frameworks to the study of ethnolinguistic vitality. One approach is to use subjective measures to examine the community of speaker's perception of and attitude towards the language and its vitality. Giles (2001) argues that language vitality is essential especially among minority groups whose languages are endangered by a confluence of factors including migration, intermarriages, among others.

The language vitality survey was conducted in two villages of Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro inhabited by the Hanunoo Mangyan, namely, *Umabang* and *Bailan*, both are enclaves of a larger village of *Benli*. Data as of May 2010 indicate that there are about 4,025 Hanunoo Mangyans, constituting 12% of the total population of the Municipality of Bulalacao (Philippine Statistics Authority).



**Figure 1. Map of Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro (Google Map)**

The survey asked the respondents regarding their socio-demographic profile. It also contained a ten-item scale measuring the attitude of the community of speakers towards the Hanunoo Mangyan language in terms of language preference, language pride, confidence in speaking the language, language as source of identity, and the importance of the language to young people. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to the statement (from strongly agree to strongly disagree).

An ethnic identity identification scale was also included in the survey. This survey measures the Hanunoo Mangyan population's sense of pride, ethnic identification, and their willingness to embrace their cultural traditions, heritage, and material and non-material cultural assets. The study respondents were also asked about the use of the language in different social contexts, namely, at

home, in school, in the community, and their day-to-day economic transactions. To test their writing ability, the respondents were also given a ten-item Surat Mangyan script identification test.

This language vitality study is quantitative and descriptive in nature and purpose. Data of this study came from a cross-section survey involving a total of 170 respondents who were selected through referral and convenience sampling. There were 85 respondents from Umabang and another 85 in Bailan, Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro. The average age of the respondents is 37 years old. Meanwhile, the youngest respondent is 18 years old while the oldest is 80. A total of 86 respondents were female and 84 were male. Many of the respondents are married (almost 70%).

**Table 1. Civil status of the respondents (N=170)**

Civil Status	Frequency
No Wife/Husband	30
Married	117
Widow/er	15
Others	8
Total	170

The respondents of the study had limited education. In fact, only 17 of the 170 respondents were able to reach college. Of the 17 respondents, only six were able to successfully complete a college degree. Many of the respondents did not finish high school.

**Table 2. Level of educational attainment of the respondents**

Level of Educational Attainment	Frequency
College graduate	6
College undergraduate	11
High school graduate	21
High school undergraduate	36
Elementary graduate	35
Elementary undergraduate	33
Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduate	2
Did not go to school/ALS	26
Total	170

Prior to the conduct of the survey, the team met with elders and leaders of the Umabang and Bailan communities for a workshop. One of the activities during the workshop was a language use mapping. This exercise provided the research team members a glimpse of the extent of the use of the Hanunoo Mangyan language in the community in relation to other languages that are also spoken by the members. The linguistic mapping activity reveals that the Hanunoo Mangyan language is still widely used especially at home. Other languages, namely, Filipino and English are only used in school and in other public spaces. During the activity, leaders of the community reported that the use of English language is very minimal and that they use English words when referring to objects that do not have direct Hanunoo Mangyan or Filipino translations. They use Filipino language at school as it is part of the curriculum.

## Ethical Considerations

The language documentation project of the team, which this paper is based on, started in 2016. Actual implementation of the study, however, began in 2018 as the team waited for the release of the *Free and Prior Informed Consent* (FPIC) from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). This is a requirement that Filipino researchers must comply before they can proceed with their data gathering activities with indigenous population in the Philippines.

To apply for the FPIC, the team held community meetings and consultations. The team had an initial meeting with community members to orient them about the rationale of conducting the language documentation. The team also had a consultative meeting with leaders of the *PHADAG* (a people's organizations composed of the different community organizations of Hanunoo Mangyans in Oriental Mindoro). Another meeting was also conducted to discuss the contents of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the research team and the Hanunoo Mangyan federations of organizations.

Apart from obtaining the FPIC, the team also applied for an ethics clearance from the DLSU Ethics Review Office (REO) of the authors' university affiliation. Because the study involved an indigenous peoples' community, the REO had to organize a full ethics review board meeting to discuss the ethical considerations of the research. The team received the ethics clearance after obtaining the FPIC from the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

After the conduct of the language documentation and ethnolinguistic vitality survey, the team had a data validation meeting to confirm the authenticity of the result and accuracy of the e-dictionary word entries. After the validation, the team went to the community to present the results and to endorse several android tablets for the Hanunoo Mangyan e-dictionary.

## Results

### *Contact with the Lowlanders*

The survey included questions relating to the contacts or day-to-day encounters of the Hanunoo Mangyan respondents and their relatives with the lowlanders (often Tagalog speakers) or *damuong* in their language. Results of the survey reveal that 92 of the 170 (54%) respondents reported that they have not experienced living outside their community. Meanwhile 78 of the 170 respondents reported to have experienced residing outside their community in the past. Half of the respondents likewise reported that one of their family members have resided outside the community in the past.

**Table 3. Experience of respondents and their family members residing outside the community**

Variable	Frequency
Respondents with experience living outside the community	78
Respondents without experience living outside the community	92
Respondents with a family member with experience living outside the community	87
Respondents with a family member without experience living outside the community	83

The respondents seem to visit the lowland irregularly. In fact, only 46 (27%) of the 170 claimed that they do visit the lowland twice a week or more. A little close to half of the respondents visit the lowland once a month or only if needed.

**Table 4. Respondents' frequency of visit in the lowland**

Frequency of Visit	Frequency
More than thrice a week	23
Thrice a week	10
Twice a week	13
Once a week	51
Once a month	67
Only if needed	6

### *Attitude towards the Hanunoo Mangyan Language*

A scale was developed to examine the attitude of the Hanunoo Mangyan towards their language. The scale contains 10 items covering language usage, linguistic pride, language as source of identity and self-expression, and ease of expression. The respondents' overall mean for this scale is 3.71, which is suggestive that they have positive attitude towards their language.

The item with the highest mean score relates to the importance for young people to learn the Hanunoo Mangyan language. This means that the respondents see the relevance and significance of teaching young people about their language. The item, which had the lowest mean score, relates to the use of Hanunoo Mangyan language as medium of classroom instruction.

**Table 5. Attitude towards the Hanunoo Mangyan language**

Attitude	Mean Score
I prefer to use Hanunoo Mangyan than Tagalog in my day-to-day activities.	3.74
Using Hanunoo Mangyan language boosts my confidence in expressing myself.	3.72
Learning Hanunoo Mangyan helps me develop my identity.	3.75
I am more relaxed if I speak the Hanunoo Mangyan language.	3.74
I am not embarrassed to speak Hanunoo Mangyan in front of the lowlanders.	3.67
I think studying Hanunoo Mangyan language is necessary because it makes us more educated.	3.67
It makes me proud when I speak the Hanunoo Mangyan language.	3.81
I find it interesting to learn the Hanunoo Mangyan language.	3.75
I am in favor of using the Hanunoo Mangyan language as medium of classroom instruction.	3.52
I think learning Hanunoo Mangyan language is important for young people.	3.76
Mean	3.71

*Legend: 3.00-4.00 Very Favorable; 2.00-2.99 Favorable; 1.9-1.99-Less Favorable*

### *Ethnic Identity Affiliation*

The survey results indicate that the respondents have a very high degree of affiliation to their Hanunoo Mangyan culture as evidenced by the overall mean score of 3.73. The item with the highest score pertains their pride of their Hanunoo Mangyan heritage and the importance of their identity as Hanunoo Mangyan. Meanwhile, the item with the lowest mean score relates to their participation in community activities celebrating their culture.

**Table 6. Ethnic identity identification among the respondents**

Items	Average
I am very proud of my Hanunoo-Mangyan heritage.	3.79
I still would like to learn more about my Hanunoo Mangyan language.	3.74
I am comfortable wearing our traditional clothing.	3.78
I am eager to listen to our traditional Hanunoo Mangyan songs and musical instruments.	3.70
I am eager to learn more about the customary laws of the Hanunoo Mangyan.	3.68
I participate in the activities of our community that are related to our Hanunoo Mangyan culture.	3.65
I am interested in learning the oral traditions of the Hanunoo Mangyan (e.g., folktales, chants)	3.68
I always tell other people that I am a Hanunoo Mangyan.	3.71
I consider my identity as Hanunoo Mangyan to be important.	3.79
It is important to me for other people to respect and recognize me as a Hanunoo Mangyan.	3.77
Mean	3.73

*Legend: 3.00-4.00 High; 2.00-2.99 Moderate; 1.9-1.99 Low*

#### *Language Use at Home*

The Hanunoo-Mangyan language is still widely spoken at home. Results of the survey indicate that many of the respondents still use their language at home while only a very few indicated otherwise. This is an indication that the Hanunoo Mangyan is still very safe in terms of degree of endangerment.

**Table 7. Language use at home**

Language	Frequency
Pure Hanunoo Mangyan	133
Usually Hanunoo Mangyan	17
Mix Filipino and Hanunoo Mangyan	20
Total	170

#### *Language Use at School*

Many of the respondents claimed that they used/have been using Filipino, English, and Hanunoo Mangyan languages at school. Use of the Filipino language is expected for their Filipino language lessons or classes. They also use the Hanunoo Mangyan language at school as mandated by a policy requiring the use of the Mother Tongue in the classroom.

**Table 8. Language use in school**

Language	Frequency
Pure Hanunoo Mangyan	17
Pure Filipino	24
Usually Hanunoo Mangyan	5
Usually Filipino	10
Mix Filipino, English and Hanunoo Mangyan	114
Total	170

#### *Language Use with Peers*

When speaking with their peers, many of the respondents still use the Hanunoo Mangyan language in their interactions with peers without having to codeswitch or to use another language. A



significant number of the respondents claimed that they use both Filipino and Hanunoo Mangyan languages as they interact with friends or neighbors. Only five of the respondents reported that they use Filipino more than the Hanunoo Mangyan language when they interact with their peers.

**Table 9. Language use with peers**

Language	Frequency
Pure Hanunoo Mangyan	104
Pure Filipino	3
Usually Hanunoo Mangyan	17
Usually Filipino	2
Mix Filipino and Hanunoo Mangyan	44
Total	170

### *Language Use with Lowlanders*

When the Hanunoo Mangyan respondents visit the lowland, they converse with the lowlanders in Filipino. They have opportunities though to speak Hanunoo Mangyan language to lowlanders who are their fellow Mangyans. However, because Filipino speakers predominantly inhabit the lowland, the Hanunoo Mangyan from Umabang and Bailan are necessitated to speak in Filipino.

**Table 10. Language use when interacting with lowlanders**

Language	Frequency
Pure Hanunoo Mangyan	19
Pure Filipino	53
Usually Hanunoo Mangyan	6
Usually Filipino	66
Mix Filipino and Hanunoo Mangyan	26
Total	170

### *Language Use in Economic Activities*

Because most of the traders are Filipino language speakers, the Hanunoo Mangyan make use of Filipino when they transact business such as selling their produce in the lowland. They, however, have opportunities in speaking their language when they engage business with fellow Hanunoo Mangyan or when their trade partners can understand the language.

**Table 11. Language use in economic activities**

Language	Frequency
Pure Hanunoo Mangyan	11
Pure Filipino	57
Usually Hanunoo Mangyan	1
Usually Filipino	29
Mix Filipino and Hanunoo Mangyan	72
Total	170

### *Language Proficiency in Mangyan Hanunoo Language (Writing)*

The respondents were likewise asked to assess their perceived level of Hanunoo Mangyan linguistic ability. Results show that only a few respondents (36 out of the 170) claimed that they have excellent to excellent level of ability in terms of writing the *Sulat Mangyan*. About a third of the respondents rated themselves to have average level. Meanwhile, close to half of the respondents indicated that they know a little about their system of writing. 10 respondents claimed that they are very incapable of writing the Surat Mangyan.

**Table 12. Self- assessment of language proficiency (Hanunoo System of Writing)**

Level	Frequency
Just a little	66
Average	58
Excellent	17
Very excellent	19
Totally incapable	10
Total	170

*Language Proficiency in Mangyan Hanunoo Language (Reading)*

The respondents are generally not proficient insofar as reading the Hanunoo Mangyan script is concerned. In fact, 46 respondents reported that they know only a little while 12 admitted that they are very incapable. Only a few of the respondents confidently reported that they have excellent to very excellent reading ability.

**Table 13. Hanunoo language proficiency (Reading)**

Level	Frequency
Just a little	46
Average	70
Excellent	24
Very excellent	18
Totally incapable	12
Total	170

The respondents were given a 10-item test requiring them to identify the syllabic reading of some Hanunoo Mangyan characters or scripts, which were chosen randomly.

✓	✓	2	2	2
2	7p	7	h	3

**Figure 2. Selected Sulat Mangyan Scripts**

The results indicate that indeed the respondents of the survey have limited knowledge on the writing system. In fact, almost half of the respondents got a score below 50%. An overwhelming number of respondents (n=57) got no correct answer. Many of those who got a score of 9 or 10 are older members of the community who in their elementary years were exposed to learning and using the scripts.

**Table 14. No. of respondents with number of correct answers**

Total Correct Answer	No. of Respondents
0	57
1	4
2	3
3	3
4	2
5	13
6	7
7	5
8	10
9	27
10	39
Total	170

Correlation test was performed to see the relationship between attitude towards the language and ethnic identity affiliation, between attitude towards the language and Surat Mangyan reading ability, and between ethnic identity affiliation and Surat Mangyan reading ability. This paper puts forward the idea that having a positive attitude towards the language results into higher ethnic identity affiliation (and vice versa) as well as high level of reading ability. In addition, higher identity affiliation may lead to high level of reading ability as well.

Test results indicate that there is a correlation between attitude towards the language and ethnic identity affiliation with a p-value of .000 and an r of .591 (positive moderate correlation). This means that as one develops a positive attitude towards the language, one also develops a strong ethnic identity affiliation. However, the ability to read Sulat Mangyan script is not necessarily due to having a positive attitude towards the language nor having a high identity affiliation.

**Table 15. Correlation tests for variables attitude towards the language, identity affiliation, and language identification**

Variables	R	P
Attitude Towards the Hanunoo Language and Ethnic Identity Affiliation	.591	.000**
Attitude Towards the Hanunoo Language and Surat Mangyan Test Score	.144	.061
Ethnic Identity Affiliation and Surat Mangyan Test Score	.061	.166

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Correlation test was likewise performed to see the relationship between age and attitude and literacy scores. Results of the test reveal that as age increases, score of the attitude towards the Hanunoo Mangyan language scale also increases. This means that attitude towards the language becomes more positive as one's age increases.

In addition, there is also a positive correlation between age and script identification test score. As age increases, test score also increases. This means that older respondents tend to have higher scores than their younger counterparts. This is expected as the younger generation were no longer that exposed to the Surat Mangyan contrary to their older counterparts who studied the system of writing when they were still in their elementary years.

**Table 16. Correlation tests for age in relation to attitude towards the language, identity affiliation, and surat mangyan test**

Variable	R
Attitude Towards Hanunoo Mangyan Language	.216**
Identity Affiliation	.114
Surat Mangyan Test Score	.389**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## Discussion

### *Is the Hanunoo Mangyan language still widely spoken in the community?*

Results of the study, as earlier indicated, reveal that the language is still widely spoken in the community. Their infrequent contact with the lowlanders or the *damuong* could have contributed to the maintenance of their language. In addition, because they are geographically hard to reach (6 hour walk), members of the Hanunoo Mangyan in Umabang and Bailan are not compelled to speak other language except their own. Their occasional contacts with the lowlanders, indeed, did not significantly language use and maintenance insofar as oral mangyan language is concerned.

While there are a few migrants, the communities of Umabang and Bailan are inhabited predominantly by the Hanunoo Mangyan speakers. As a result, the spoken Hanunoo Mangyan language is still very much alive. However, when not given due attention, the community of Hanunoo Mangyan speakers may be unable to read and write the Surat Mangyan due to lack of exposure to the language.

### *Is the system of writing still being used among members of the community across generations?*

The survey demonstrated that many of the survey respondents are no longer familiar with the Surat Mangyan. As evidenced by the results, younger generation of Hanunoo Mangyans are no longer literate when it comes to their writing system. Results of the script identification test revealed that many younger respondents got low scores compared to their older counterparts. This result implies that if the community will not be critical and serious about transmitting their linguistic heritage, the system of writing may simply become a linguistic artifact. Older members of the community, during their younger years, were taught how to write the Surat Mangyan. However, in recent years, students are no longer exposed to the writing system. Even if the Surat Mangyan will be taught, its survival will remain elusive unless this will be used in different social contexts daily.

### *What is the level of ethnic identification of the respondents and how this affects interest in learning the language?*

Results of the study reveal that the Hanunoo Mangyan highly regard their culture and traditions. They seem to exhibit language pride and they value the importance of preserving their linguistic heritage. The language and cultural pride are necessary precursors for the speech community to preserve and transmit their language and culture from one generation to the next. As can be gleaned from the results, the Hanunoo Mangyan respondents both have positive attitude towards the language and have a strong sense of identity affiliation. However, adult respondents had higher scores than their younger counterparts who are more exposed to modernity. While they are still highly literate when it comes to oral language, their level of literacy in terms of their writing system

is very low. Their relative distance to the mainstream culture (the lowlanders) has helped their language to survive. However, when their communities become accessible and their interaction with the lowlanders become frequent, their minority language will face oral language attrition. Their interactions with other groups, indeed, have resulted to the disappearance of their system of writing. To date, many of the younger generations are already bilingual. In bilingualism, according to Onditi (2016), “people lose language when they use other languages for most purposes in most domains thereby affecting their familiarity with the structure and vocabulary of their languages” (p.17).

## **Conclusion**

The Hanunoo Mangyan language is still safe as it is still widely spoken in the communities. Moreover, it appears that there is no threat to the language as it is still being used in various social contexts. Specifically, the results of the survey are indicative of the universal use of the language in social interactions at home and in the community. It is also a source of identity and a sense of pride, which primarily is the driving force for the language to survive amidst encounters with people from the dominant cultures. Although, one must not discount the fact that the communities in the study are gearing towards multilingual parity as their members make use of several languages depending on which social domain or social function they are in. Their contacts with the rest of the world may have future implications on the survival of their language.

While results seem to develop an impressive picture of the language, the Hanunoo Mangyan language orthographically speaking is critically endangered. The results indicated that only a very few of the respondents are able to identify or write the script. Indeed, there is a clear and present danger that the system of writing will eventually vanish, as it is no longer being used in various social functions. For this system to regain its presence in the community, the orthography needs to be accessible, visible, and functional.

Results of the study also suggest that the respondents value their language and that they seem to be cognizant about the immediate need to promote the language including its orthography to the younger generation. Thus, serious language revival efforts must be institutionalized such as teaching the system of writing to the younger generation and compelling them to use it in social functions as these are the practical means to save the language for its survival.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest to declare

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