



JOURNEY IN HERITAGE LANGUAGE PRESERVATION: VOICES OF THE KAGAN SPEAKERS

Anna Liza C. Cerbo, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

The emergence and embracement of immigrant languages threaten indigenous languages to be neglected resulting to become extinct. This qualitative study aimed to gather the oral literature and analyze the morphosemantic features of the Kagan language in Hagonoy, Davao del Sur to help preserve the language and the culture of the tribe which has gradually vanished because of assimilation with people of different culture and language. Kagan elders whose ages ranging from 46 to 92 years old were the informants, with nine assigned for the FGD and 14 for the IDI. Results revealed that Kagan's preserved oral literature consists of prayer, lyric poetry, and poem. It also divulged that Kagan language is rich of distinct characteristics in terms of its morphology and semantics. The retrieved oral literatures' morphological features include affixes, verb tenses, pronouns, descriptive adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions. The semantic features are the deictic expressions, denotative words, connotative words, symbols, synonymy, antonymy, and dialectal words. Further, results of the study would provide essential information on the morphosemantic features which convey the existence of an ethnolinguistic group that bears its distinct cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS: Education, Applied Linguistics, Kagan language, phenomenology, morphosemantic features, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Language determines one's culture, history, and identity. It is used to claim the national or local identity and subsequently forms members in the social group and participants in its culture. The onset of modernized and industrialized world welcomes immigrant languages that risk the status of the minority languages (Allardt, 1979) creating a potential of the dominant language to devour smaller languages around the world (Molina, 2012). This made many linguists to predict that by the next century, about half of the world's five or six thousand languages particularly the minority languages will be extinct (Nettle & Romaine, 2000).

In the United States, Cho (2015) reported that there is a decline of the heritage language of the Spanish-speaking high school students in Miami, Florida as they move through school because of constant interaction of these children of immigrants with English speaking children. The same report on the study of Nguyen, Shin, and Krashen (2001) that a similar decline was found among Vietnamese-speaking children in the United States in elementary and middle school.

Meanwhile, in the study of Headland (2003), 30 endangered languages in the Philippines were noted; two were already identified extinct – the Agta, Dicamay and the Agta, Villa Viciosa expounded in his study in 2010. Like the Kagan tribe, there is a dearth of recorded collection of Kagan cultures particularly its oral literatures and language features that if not saved may lead to its language death signifying the loss of the unwritten oral literatures. In addition, the report of Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2019) states that Kagan language is in its threatened status because it is already losing its users leaving about 500 speakers. The Kagan population is not determined as

they are counted together with the Kalagans, which however, according to the ethnologue and the report of Asa and Dag Wendel (2002), the two are of different tribes. Hence, no exact and separate statistical file of the Kagans.

Marfil (2014) reported that Kalagan (or Kagan) tribes used to be a single tribe. However, they were later divided into two. Half of the group followed the Muslim faith, while the other half retained their traditional faith. The Kalagans are described as an Austronesian dialect and a group that lives in the uplands inland from the western coast of the Davao Gulf in Mindanao particularly in Davao del Sur, southwest of Davao City inland along coast, Compostela Valley, and Davao Oriental provinces. Kalagan dialects are Isamal dialect in Samal Island; Western dialect in Davao Oriental Province; Lupon along the gulf down to Hagonoy and Guihing near Digos City; and Eastern dialect mainly Davao Oriental Province (Hays, 2015).

The Barangay Leling in Hagonoy, a municipality in Davao del Sur was considered as the most solid Kagan community in around 1980's. As to the exact figure of the total Kagan population, it was difficult to determine since the data from the National Census and Statistics Office (NCSO) in 1980, did not differentiate between Muslim-Kalagan and Kagan-Kalagan (Asa & Dag Wendel, 2002).

The Kagan tribe as shown in the result of the study of Yu (2017) has also its oral literature preserved, however, limited. They have the "balyan", an old folk expert in rituals, who is authorized to chant the folk epic. The folk epics they have preserved and documented expressed that the beliefs and values possessed by their tribesmen are deeply rooted from their ancestor's experiences which were passed on orally from generations to generations. The oral literature of this tribal



group serves as evidence that the Kagan ancestral language and cultural heritage is still in its existence. Nevertheless, the closeness to and daily interaction with the dominant Cebuano language speakers, Asa and Dag Wendell (2002) argued that Kagan speakers would either switch to Cebuano or mix languages thus, eradicating the Kagan language.

Moreover, since oral literature determines distinction of one's language and culture from the other, it can be analyzed through its linguistic and non-linguistic attributes. In the stylistics of oral literature, the artist is closely observed in his "manners of expression" in terms of diction, sentence patterns, sound patterns, and paralinguistic accompaniments. This can be evident in the use of such figures of speech as personification, symbolism, imagery, metaphor, allusion, etc. all of which give oral literature its beauty and aesthetic value (Emezue, 2018). Meanwhile, the language in oral literature can also be dealt by its morpho-semantic analysis as used by Dorais (2016) and focusing on the verbs as lexical category of the Edo language by Omoregbe and Aigbedo (2015). Before Omoregbe and Aigbedo delved into the semantic classification (function) of verbs in the language, they look first at the morphological compositions (form) of the different verbs.

Further to say, it may not yet a language extinction on the Kagan language because there are still Kagans who speak their language, but with the Cebuano speakers in attendance and a failure to preserve this threatened language through documenting their oral literature, this indigenous language may come to its saddened fate. Asa and Dag Wendell (2002) argued that the closeness to and daily interaction with the Cebuano speakers, Kagans would either switch to Cebuano or mix languages thus, eradicating the Kagan language.

This phenomenological investigation attempted to unveil the successes and struggles of the Kagan speakers in their heritage language transmission and preservation through recording their oral literatures. This study also archived the oral literatures and its linguistic features which could be the source for MTB-MLE materials for Kagan learners.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the existing oral literature of the Kagans?
2. What are the linguistic features of Kagan oral literature?

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research to examine the path of the Kagan elders in archiving their oral literature and analyzing its morphosemantics to ward off ethnic extinction. Purposively chosen were the 23 Kagan elders, 14 of which were subjected to the in-depth interview (IDI) and nine to the focus group discussion (FGD). Creswell (2013) conforms that in the phenomenological research 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon are enough number to have the saturation of data. The following are the inclusion criteria: Kagan elders must be aged 50 and above whose first language is Kagan; elders may be male or female; they must be born with and raised by both Kagan parents who have not intermarried with other tribal individual; and they may be educated, professionals, or never have been in school. However, Kagan speakers age below 50 years old were excluded in this study as they are believed to have limited information on the historical information of Kagan culture and language.

The researcher sought approval from the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to be presented to the Office of the IP Mandatory Representative, the local office taking charge of the minority groups in the area. The Tribal chieftains were used as gatekeepers to reach out the participants of the study. The informed consent must be obtained informing of the rights of the participants. They were also told that they may opt to decline in the middle of the study if they felt uncomfortable already. As soon as all the necessary processes were done, interview proper and note taking on the Kagan oral literature as evidence of language preservation immediately followed.

Aside from the IDI and FGD that were used to gather the corpora for this research, the existing oral literature documented during the interview and the archived eight written literatures were also the sources to substantiate in analyzing the morphosemantics of the Kagan language. All recorded responses were transcribed, translated and compared, coded into categories, grouped and organized to extract the essential themes. The analyzed linguistic features were validated by an expert Kagan speaker who could understand English. Before finalizing the full manuscripts, a presentation to the community was conducted and attended by the Kagan leaders and elders and a representative from the NCIP Office for the purpose of validation.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
The Existing Oral Literature of the Kagan

Existing Oral Literature	Title
Prayer	Ama Nami (Our Father) Paningayo (Prayer)
Poem	Pagpuno sa Banwa Yan (In the Beginning of the Earth) Awon Tahas ni Moises (The Mission of Moses)
Lyric Poetry	Pagdanga (Game) <i>Topic: Courtship</i> Pagdanga (Game) <i>Topic: During Wake</i>
Folk Tales	Si Tilanduk aw Busaw (Tilanduk and the Monster) Si Tongtong aw Datu ay Banwa Lanip Ga (Tongtong and the Datu of Lanip Ga) Ya Pagtanam na Duwa Mannanap Magtagauk asta Umpu (The Battle between the Two Animals Magtagauk and Umpu) Ya Pagdiyandi na Kagan aw Buwaya (The Blood Compact of the Kagan and the Crocodile) Si Mollog aw Kura Nan (Mollog and His Horse) Ya Datu aw Biya ay Banwa Magagong (The Datu and the Princess in Magagong)
Fables	Ya Kasampetanan na Ube aw Kalibangbang (The Story of the Monkey and the Butterfly) Ya Lawan aw Agtuk (The Lawaan and the Black Ant)

Table 1 presents the gathered oral literatures of the Kagan in Hagonoy, Davao del Sur of which six oral literatures are narrated by the key informants that include two prayers, two lyric poetry, and two poems. However, due to the limited preserved oral literatures from them and restricted words from the pieces, eight documented written literary pieces that include the six folktales and two fables are included to substantiate the study on the morphosemantics of the language.

Prayer

Ama Nami is a memorized prayer expressing that Kagans are believer of God. The acknowledgement and the passing on of this old prayer to the young generation signifies that the remaining Kagans are Christians but retained some of their old beliefs like ritual. The prayer describes that Kagans are submissive to God or to Timanem or Magbabaya and that He is so powerful that he can provide all their needs as expressed in the line: *Ya kanan nami sa lahat na allaw, iyatag kanami arun na allaw* Give us this day our daily food (PR1L8).

Poem

The poems reflect that Kagans have their belief on the words of God. *Pagpuno sa Banwa yan* (In the Beginning) describes the creation particularly of the first man and woman and how the sin came to earth. The symbols signify that human beings were created by God and the use of the *gusok* (ribs) speaks the submission of a woman to man and the *dawon* (leaves) suggests realization of the presence of sin. The poem expresses that Kagans acknowledge their Timanem as the creator of everything. On the other hand, the poem *Awon Tahas ni Moises* (The Mission of Moses) is expressing the mood of anger through the use of the descriptive words like *dakwa karaman* (big anger), *miraman* (angry), and *mingkamatay* (died).

Lyric Poetry

Pagdanga is a Kagan term for game. As experienced by the informants during their younger years, every time there was a bereaved family because of the death of a family member, neighbors would visit the family to give their condolences and comfort. One way of comforting the family was to do a *pagdanga* in a form of verse or “*berso-berso*” (as others called it) which issues could be about death or about love. Sometimes the game was as a chance of a man to court and win the heart of a lady. This game was usually done during wake. Kagan believe that death brings grief to the family members because nobody knows where the soul of the dead would go.

Folktales

Si Tilanduk aw Busaw is a folktale that talks about the determination of a boy named Tilanduk to avenge the *busaw* (monster) who orphaned him. The war efforts of Tilanduk describe the characteristics of the Kagan on how they deal with their enemies that they will never cease in avenging not until they could defeat their enemy and obtain their victory. Moreover, the words *sinampan* (*jar*), and *agung* (*tribal musical instrument*) mentioned in the folktale articulate the objects used in the olden times by the Kagans giving additional distinctions to their identity.

Si Tongtong aw Datu ay Banwa Lanip Ga is another folktale that speaks about having a reward if one shows kindness to others and to the nature. The words *langgam* (*bird*), *buntud* (*mountain*), *mannanap* (*wild animals*), *isda* (*fish*) suggest that because Kagans had only few neighbors in the olden times, they only interacted with the nature around them. Further, the words *kamagi* (*gold necklace*), and *mutiya* (*pearls*) speak of the richness of the place in natural resources, while the *kubaw* (*turban*), and *pamukan* (*tribal belt*) suggest that the Kagans use



the objects as their body accessories giving the tribe a unique appearance from the other tribes.

Another folktale is the *Ya Pagtanam na Duwa Mannanap Magtagauk asta Umpu* that tells about the fight of the two big snakes that was witnessed by a *mangayaw* (hunter). The use of *mangayaw*, *babuy iyas* (wild pig) and *dilek* (spear) in the story signifies that hunting is one of the Kagan's survival activity of long ago.

Ya Pagdiyandi na Kagan aw Buwaya is another folktale using the third person point of view that describes the strength and the bravery of the Kagans in combatting any enemy, even wild animals, they may encounter. There are many symbols used in the story like crocodile, princess, datu, and blood compact that speak of the nature of the tribe. It also defines the Kagan's place – Padada and Balutakay in Hagonoy, Davao del Sur – that once were surrounded with rivers infested by crocodiles. In the story, the *biya* (princess) and the only child of a Datu in Padada is devoured by a crocodile as she bathes in the river.

Si Mollog aw Kura nan is another ancient story that speaks of a child of a slave who desires to marry a *biya* (princess), a daughter of a datu. It also conveys the status gap between a slave and a datu in the olden times among the Kagans. Mollog as a slave has his thin horse while the Datu has hundreds of horses.

Fables

Ya Kasampetanan na Ube aw Kalibangbang is a literary piece that showcases the fight between the arrogant *ube* (monkey) and the gentle *kalibangbang* (butterfly). The use of *marayig ube* (many monkeys), *kalibangbang*, and *dagat* (sea) reflects that their ancestors were living in the forest and surrounded with waters.

The use of the butterfly as the protagonist in the story signifies the characteristic of the Kagans. Similar with the butterfly, Kagans are not trouble-making tribe. But if they are challenged and disturbed by enemies, they will never refuse and they will really fight back.

The final literature is also a fable entitled *Ya Lawan aw Agtuk* that talks about the consequence of being proud. Pride will bring one to destruction. The vivid arrogant character of the *lawan* signifies the other tribes while the humble ant symbolizes the Kagan clan. This is how other tribes regard themselves comparing to other groups. It may be a good attribute for one's group putting pride and prestige, but if it is not appropriately used, it will dispel them. The same with the other tribal groups, Kagan people has also the pride of their ancestry yet humble in preserving their reputation.

Table 2.1
Morphological Features of Oral Kagan Literature on Affixation and Verb Tense

Prefix	Root Word	Past Tense	Present Tense	Future Tense
<i>pig-</i>	patay dakep	Pig+patay = killed Pig+dakep = caught		
<i>mi-</i>	dugdug ari	Mi+dugdug = broke Mi+ari = cut		
<i>mika-</i>	demdem dengeg	Mika+demdem= thought Mika+dengeg = heard		
<i>mig-</i>	lawung tanam		Mig+lawung =saying mig+tanam =fighting	
<i>ipa-</i>	ug de			Ipa+ug = will throw Ipa+de = will bring
<i>mag-</i>	agi sugbu			mag+agi = will pass by mag+sugbu = will take a bath
Infix	Root Word	Past Tense	Present Tense	Future Tense
<i>-im</i>	layug sugaw	L+im+ayug = flew S+im+ugaw = cried		
<i>-um</i>	luwa dateng			L+um+uwa = will come out dumateng = will arrive, will reach
Circumfix	Root Word	Past Tense	Present Tense	Future Tense
<i>pag – an</i>	kallek ngan	Pag+kallek+an = feared Pag+ngan+an = named		
<i>ki – an</i>	agi ubad	Ki+agi+an = encountered Ki+ubad+an = untied, released		



It is presented in Table 2.1 the morphological analysis of the Kagan language on the affixation and the verb tense found in the gathered oral literature. Parallel to its affixation is the verb tense. The affixation that signal verbs and tenses includes prefix, infix, and circumfix. The suffix is not discussed in this table since it does not indicate action verbs, rather, a noun marker. The fundamental characteristic in the verb system of the Kagan language is that it consists of different affixes.

The common prefixes are [pig-], [mika-], [mi-], [mig-], [ipa-], [mag-]. The prefixes [pig-], [mika-], and [mi-] indicate actions that are done in the past. Examples of these are the *pig-* in the words *pig + patay* (killed) and *pig + kita* (saw). The prefix [mi-] also signals past action like *mi + dugdug* (broke). Another common prefix is the [mig-] which is used to indicate continuous action in the present time. This can be seen in the example *mig + lawung* (“(present) be” verb + saying). Moreover, both prefixes [ipa-] and [mag-] are used to indicate futurity of the action as noticed in the examples *ipa + ug* (will throw) and *mag + agi* (will pass by).

Another affixation in the Kagan language is the infix which is the attachment of bound morphemes in the middle of the root word. The common infixes are [-im-] and [-um-]. Both are used for consonant initials of the root words. On one hand, the [-im-] is used to tell past action as in the example *-im- + layug = limayug* (flew). On the other hand, the infix [-um-] signals futurity of the action like the *-um- + luwa = lumuwa* (will come out).

The circumfix is another affixation found in the Kagan language. They are the [pag-an] and [ki-an]. Both circumfixes suggest actions done in the past. In the example *pag + kallek + an = pagkallekan* which means *feared*, the action verb is not only suggesting past action but also indicating verb in the passive voice. However, it is not in the circumfix [ki-an] as being used in the words *ki + agi + an = kiagian* means *encountered*, which only signals action that is already done.

Table 2.2
Morphological Features of Oral Kagan Literature on Word Classes

Word Class	Examples	Meaning
Pronouns		
• Personal Nominative	aku, kami	I, we
• Accusative / Dative	kanak, kanami	me, us
• Genitive	kanak, name	mine, our
• Indefinite	lahat	all
Descriptive Adjectives	Marayaw, maneg, matas	Good, strong, high/tall
	kabut, dakwa, tagbi	Brave, big, small
Adverbs		
• Manner	gayed, kenne	Strongly/surely, continuously
• Direction	dun, adti	there
• Location	sed	inside
• Position	asidi, ari	here
• Time	arun, kinsem	now, tomorrow
• Frequency	pirmi	always
Conjunctions		
• Coordinating	aw	and
• Subordinating	kay, kun	because, if

In Kagan language, word classes that are evident are the pronouns, descriptive adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions as shown in Table 2.2.

Pronouns are found in the gathered oral literature. Unlike the English language which pronouns provide a clear distinction of gender class, Kagan language does not have this characteristic. They also have personal pronouns that are nominatives like *aku* (“I”), and *kami* that means (“we”). Accusative/dative pronouns are also found like *kanak* (“me”) and *kanami* meaning (“us”). However, both *kanak* and *kanami* are not only used as accusative but also as genitive as shown in the examples *ya kanak kubaw* (my turban) and *ya kanami eped* (our companions). The *kanak* is used as “my” while the *kanami* is used as “our” in the sample sentences. Finally, Kagan language has only one indefinite pronoun, the *lahat* which means “all”.

Adjectives are also one of the characteristics of the Kagan language. The descriptive adjectives found from the gathered oral literature characteristically have the affix *-ma* like the words *marayaw* (good); *maneg* (strong) and *matas* (high or tall). However, there are also bare stems like *kabut* (brave) in *mangkabut utaw* (many brave men) which the *mang-* is a prefix indicating plurality. Other examples are *dakwa* (big) *dakwa kauy* (big tree), and *tagbi* (small).

Adverbs in Kagan show its different aspects. The words *gayed* (strongly, surely) and *kenne* (continuously) are adverbs of manner. The words *dun* and *adti* which both means “there” are another aspect of adverb showing direction found in the Kagn



oral literature. Meanwhile, present also in the Kagan language is the adverb of giving location like the word *sed* (inside) and another examples that are indicating position like the *asidi* or *ari* which both means “here”. Furthermore, the adverbs of time and frequency are also evident in the Kagan language like the words *arun* (now) and *kinsem* (tomorrow) are indicating time while the word *pirmi* (always) indicates the frequency of an action.

Conjunctions are used to connect two ideas. In the Kagan language, the coordinating and subordinating conjunctions are observed. The word *aw* (and) is a coordinating conjunction used to link two words or two sentences. There are also subordinating conjunctions found in the gathered oral literatures like the words *kun* (if) and *kay* (because) that once attached to the sentence, they create a subordinating clause.

Table 2.3
Semantic Features of Oral Kagan Literature

Kind / Type	Examples	Meaning
Deictic expressions	dun, adti	there
• spatial deixis	asidi, ari	here
• personal deixis	ku, aku kami	I we
• temporal deixis	arun, kinsem	now, tomorrow
Denotative / Conceptual	buyag, kalibangbang	old woman, butterfly
Connotative / Affective	buyag kalibangbang	missing someone, longing nature, communion with God, lightness
Symbols	Kaguwangan(forest) tubig (water)	mysterious, unknown birth, fertility, cleansing, refreshment, purity home of spirits, spiritual nourishment, liberation, union and fertility
Synonymy	kauy (tree) dakwa – mabakla utaw – eseg	big man
Antonymy		
• gradable	Dakwa – tagbi marayaw – mikaket	big – small good – bad
• converse	mingkauge – pigbuntun pigkebuso – pigpaluwa	scattered – gathered
• complementary / relational	ama – ina datu – allang	imprisoned – released father – mother leader – slave
• polarity	pigbanggetan – pigubad	tied – untied
Dialectal words	Kubaw, kampilan, dilek	turban, sword, spear

The semantic features evident in the gathered oral literatures are presented in Table 2.3. The deictic expressions, denotative or conceptual words, connotative or affective words, symbols, synonymy, antonymy, and dialectal words are the features discussed in this part.

Deictic expressions are words that point to the time, place, or situation in which a speaker is speaking. In this study, the expressions are in the form of spatial deixis, personal deixis, and temporal deixis. For the words in spatial deixis, the speaker is pointing to a direction or location like *dun* and *idtu* (there) and *ari* and *asidi* (here). In the same manner, the personal deixis are also found in the gathered words. The *ku* and *aku* that means “I” are pointing the first person singular or the person himself while the *kami* meaning “we” is pointing to the first person plural. Another deitic expression is the temporal deixis which are words that denote time. Instances for these are *arun* (now) and *kinsem* (tomorrow).

Denotative / conceptual is another semantic feature found in the Kagan language which are evident in the gathered oral literature. These are words having dictionary meanings and are showing literal references. Examples are the words *buyag* as a Kagan word for an old woman referring to an aged woman worthy of respect from the young ones and *kalibangbang* (butterfly) which is a kind of an insect that flies with often brightly colored wings.

Connotative / affective are words that suggest a meaning apart from its explicit definition. The denotation of the Kagan words has its connotation. Like for instance the *buyag* or old woman could mean missing someone or longing for someone or something as reflected in the story *Ya Pagdiyandi na Kagan aw Buwaya* (The Blood compact Between the Kagan and the Crocodile). The story tells about the *buyag* who witnessed how her only one daughter was devoured by a crocodile. She was so saddened on the incident and the succeeding events in the story described how she expressed her extreme grief on the loss of her child.



Symbols are another semantic feature from the gathered literature that speak of the nature and culture of the Kagan people particularly their ancestors. The *kaguwangan* (forest), *tubig* (water), and *kauy* (tree) are only few examples of symbolisms reflecting the nature of living that the old Kagan had. The *kaguwangan* or the forest is suggesting the unknown and mysteriousness of the roots of the ancient Kagan where they got the pattern of their practices and traditions distinct from other groups. This is further suggesting that their forefathers were settling in thick forests and from the unknown species inhabiting in the vast area, the mysterious knowledge of the ancient Kagan able them to determine animals and plants that would help them in their survival.

Synonymy is also present as a semantic feature in the Kagan language. Many words are found synonymous like *dakwa* and *mabakla*. Both are adjectives that have the same meaning of “big”. However, *dakwa* is preferably and commonly used by Kagan speakers rather than the *mabakla*. For nouns, the *utaw* has the same meaning with *eseg* which both words mean “man” but the word *utaw* may also refer to people regardless of gender while the *eseg* refers only to “male”.

Antonymy denotes the oppositeness of the words. From the gathered literatures, the antonymy is shown in the different types: gradable, converse, complementary or relational, and polarity. For gradable antonyms, the words are expressing relationships along a continuum like the adjectival words *dakwa* or *mabakla* which means “big” that are in opposite to *tagbi* “small”. The converse antonymy is also shown in the word *mingkaug* “scattering” that is conversely opposite to *pigbuntun* “gatherd”. Furthermore, complementary or relational antonymy are also evident in the gathered lexemes. This type of antonym is having pairs of opposites where one cannot exist without the other such as if there is an *ama* “father” there must have an *ina* “mother”. Finally, the word *pigbanggetan* which means “tied” is completely opposed yet interconnected to *pigubad* “untied” denoting a polarity antonymy that is suggesting opposites that are interconnected.

Dialectal words are the final semantic feature found in the Kagan oral literature. These dialectal terms are confined to a definite locality that reflect the culture and the identity of a tribe like that of the Kagans. The *kubaw* that means “turban” or “head dress” is signifying the traditional costume of the Kagan people. *ya datu miglawung sa bakleg, ayawan ku kanmu ya kanak kubaw.* (the Datu is telling to the old man, I will leave you my head dress.) The given example is suggesting that the head dress symbolizes power and authority worn by an influential member in the tribe like a leader or a datu.

DISCUSSION

Existing Oral Literatures of the Kagan

The six existing oral literatures served as testimonies of customary beliefs of the Kagan and their faith to their God that are continually observed by this tribal group. The results confirm to what Ki-Zerbo (1990) explained that oral tradition can be interpreted as a testimony delivered verbally from one generation to the next and can also be interpreted as a form of a number of customs that have been established in certain

communities, a series of belief, the routines which is performed repeatedly to show the continuity through the spoken word or phrase by mouth as argued by Errington (1984). Oral literature is then conveying a verbal testimony about the things in the past that is passed on to the young generations. Additionally, the study conducted in Hagonoy, Davao del Sur where the researcher had encountered only few Kagan elders who could recall their oral literatures supports the report of Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig (2019) on having identified the Kagan language as a threatened language because of its decreasing number of users.

Morphological Features

The morphological features found are affixes, tense of verb, pronouns, descriptive adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions. According to Manova (2014) prefixes and suffixes are the most common types of affixes cross-linguistically. Kagan language being from a group of Austronesian dialects as cited by Blust (2020) shows many affixes which most of them are verb-forming. This is confirmed in the study of Levin and Polinsky (2019) that verb morphology is richer in Austronesian than nominal morphology.

The word classes are also evident in Kagan language. They are the pronouns, descriptive adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions. Pronouns are evident; however, unlike in English that consists many rules like, for example, its pronoun can identify gender by the use of “he” or “she”, the Kagan language is different because it cannot provide clear distinction of gender class as it does not adhere to it. The Kagan language can be identified in number (singular and plural), person (first, second, third) and case (nominative, accusative and genitive) just like in English.

The adjectival words are also found in the Kagan language. In many languages there is one lexical category whose primary function is to modify noun. This category is generally labeled Adjective according to Kroeger (2005). Despite of being agglutinative, bareness of the stem is also observable in the Kagan language. The adverbs in Kagan on the other hand, are used in different aspects. The use of their intensifier *tuu* and *untu* (very) is an example of this that do not have affixes. Pearson (2003) refers intensifier to “a word, usually an adverb, that is used to emphasize an adjective, adverb or verb. However, observing the patterns of their adverbs, there are no markers in their morphological structure unlike in English that the use of *-ly* signifies its being an adverb.

Conjunctions is another morphological feature found in Kagan language. Mauri (2017) articulated that it is defined as linguistic elements that link two or more words, phrases, clauses, or sentences within a larger unit, in such a way that a specific semantic relation is established between them. There are different groups of morphological structure of conjunctions in English; however, Kagan language shows only two uses – coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Morphologically, their conjunctions are in the base form and do not need for affixes to perform their function.



Semantic Features

Semantic features found in Kagan language are deictic features, denotative and connotative, symbols, synonymy and antonymy, and the dialectal words.

Deictic features of the Kagan language are expressed in spatial, personal, and temporal deixis. Huang (2007) affirms that "Deixis is a universal linguistic phenomenon, that is, all human languages contain deictic terms". Kagan language is not excused from this. It also has several deictic expressions. Levinson (1983, cited in Stapleton, 2016) explained that deixis can be understood if contextual information of utterance is present. We cannot identify the meaning of this utterance, unless we know the time of the utterance, the place, and who the speaker is, in other words the context of the utterance.

For the denotative and connotative, most of the words taken from the gathered literary pieces are associated with nature like *trees, butterfly, moon, stars, tears*. The words are not ordinarily used in the literature as they do not simply express a thought, but also express feelings beyond the word's literal meaning according to Sekhar Rao (2017) that reflect the culture of the Kagan people. The connotation of the terms adds elements of emotion, attitude, or color of the Kagan cultural heritage like how the Kagan regarded the nature, such as trees, for it is where they were heavily linked as part of their life and survival in the old times.

Further to say, the symbols used in the oral literatures like forest, blood, water, mountain, anahaw, snake, and fire are associated in the warring, wandering, and hunting ways of life in the past. Everything that the old Kagan did, in their life, any biological, or internal need took place in the forest. Their spiritual needs were also gratified in the woods. As contested by Marfil (2014), many Kagan are still ethnic religionists, believing in the traditions and religions of their forefathers. They continue to believe in a variety of environmental spirits.

Synonymy and antonymy transpired also as semantic feature for Kagan language which entails the richness of their vocabulary. The synonymy is reflected in the varied lexical categories like adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs while the antonymy is used in adjectives, verbs, and nouns. The correct usage and the knowledge of when and how to use these types of words as articulated by Bisera (2018) is considered to be one of the characteristics of the highest level of speaking skills of any foreign language.

Finally, the dialectal words in Kagan articulate of their characteristic since the words like *dilek, sawwe, biya, pamukan, kubaw dagum*, are words that are only encountered in the Kagan tribe. This speaks of their distinction from the other tribal groups. The symbol, together with the allegory, forms a dialectical unity where the terms mutually highlight one another; therefore, the allegory is at the same time, the sign and the significance, and the symbol is just the sign argued by Pedersen (2015).

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper contributes to the appreciation of the Kagan culture and to the understanding of the morphosemantic features of the Kagan language. The study is delimited to the gathered oral literatures but the help of the few written literatures retrieved from the SIL archived, it provided substantiated details to analyze the morphological and semantic features of the language. This study recommends for various researches related to this study particularly on the investigation of morphology and semantics.

Other researches like distinctions of Kagan, Kalagan, and Tagakaulo languages can also be done to have a wider lens of the variations of culture and distinct linguistic features of the three languages which are believed to have belonged to one family. Finally, those researchers seeking for professional and personal growth in understanding culture and language may cite this study as reference.

CONCLUSIONS

I, the researcher, not having the blood of a Kagan nor having the idea of how to use the language was determined to unveil the hidden uniqueness of the Kagan who are just only known of their label and not anymore of their cultural identity.

This study provided me opportunity to interact with the indigenous people in Hagonoy, Davao del Sur and to meet the old Kagan author and illustrator of his time who did help in the preservation of the language and culture of the tribe. I realized that even marginalized and once discriminated tribe had contributed to the preservation of the diverse cultural heritage of the archipelago.

The study served as a prelude towards addressing the significance of language description and documentation of cultural heritage as a tool of language understanding, empowerment, and cultural awareness. And above all, this seemingly painstaking unsurmountable linguistic journey served as the leeway of unlocking the portals to peek through the possible and scholarly endeavor of countering language extinction.

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