

Variations in the Lexicon of the Three Generations of Inabaknon Speakers

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Abstract This study investigated the lexical variations in Inabaknon as used by three generations of speakers, the old, middle-aged and young. The ethnolinguistic type of investigation was employed using Speech Elicitation Guide and a Word Checklist to collect the language data needed in the study. The most number of words collected were common to all the three generations of informants. The old generation had more unique words or words that they alone used than the other two generations. Some of the words were of Spanish and Samaron origin and Catholicism had a great influence on the language. The middle generation shared most of their vocabularies with the old and the young generations. The language of the young generation is influenced by their exposure to the different technological media. They had also the most number of absent Inabaknon lexicon. Some of these are words they can understand but are no longer active in their vocabulary. Some words are already unintelligible to the youth.

Keywords Lexical Variations, Lexical Change, Inabaknon, Generations, Ethnolinguistic

1. Introduction

Inabaknon, a language spoken in an island named Capul, Northern Samar in the Philippines, is one of the eight distinct Sama-Badjaos Southern Proto Philippine languages, [2] a sub-group belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family of languages. It is a very distinct language making it so different from the other Visayan languages of the nearby towns.

The Sama languages belong to a group of languages which has members in Sabah, Malaysia. Within the Philippines, Inabaknon is the most different of the Sama languages, forming a separate subgroup against the other seven languages [3]. It is the only Sama language which was not subjected to the Arabic influence via Islam [4]. A proof of this is the solid faith of the Abaknons in

Catholicism up to the present day.

The coming of Spanish Catholicism in 1596 made the island of Capul one of the centers of evangelization for Christianity. This brought about a heavy Spanish influence upon the Inabaknon particularly on the old native speakers of the language [5]. Through migration during the mid-1960s, Capuleños became interested in higher education in order to seek better economic opportunities. This brought about cross-cultural exchange which to some extent affected the homogeneity of the Inabaknon language and culture. In spite of the above development, the older folk still preserve their native language through constant use and close association with their kind.

For over the years, Inabaknon has undergone language change specifically in its lexicon. There are words that the older people use which to the younger generation are already unintelligible. In much the same way, the young have words which are not understood by the old. The words being used by the young generation which are unintelligible to the old generation are those brought in by the new technologies. Natural phenomena which believed to be happening in the present time because of climate change were also part of the vocabulary of the young and the middle generations.

This study was meant to keep a record of the changes that happened in the Inabaknon language through time particularly in the vocabulary of the three generations of its speakers.

2. Objectives

This study aimed at presenting the variations in the lexicon of three generations of Inabaknon speakers – the young, the middle-aged and the old. Specifically, the objectives were as follows: 1) list down the words that are commonly used by the older, middle and younger generations; 2) find out the words used by the older generation which are not commonly used by the middle and the younger generations; 3) identify the words used by the middle generation which are not commonly used by the

older and the younger generations; 4) find out the words used by the younger generation which are not commonly used by the older and the middle generations; and 5) find out the variations in the lexicon observed between and among the older, middle and younger generations of Inabaknon speakers.

3. Methodology

This study on the variations in the lexicon of Inabaknon is an ethnolinguistic type of investigation because it desired to study the Abaknon people (or Capuleño) then and now through their language as used by three generations of its speakers.

The informants of this study were the native speakers of Inabaknon. There were categorized into generations – old, middle and young. This categorization of respondents used a 20-year interval between the three generations. The young generation were those whose age ranged from 18 – 38; the middle aged, from 39 – 59; the old, from 60 – 80 and above to include the oldest living Abaknon who was 93 years old during the conduct of the study. In each group, fifty (50) persons were taken as informants. The main criteria for choosing the informants was age, however the old generation informants must be native born Abaknon, must have not gone beyond grade 3, non-literate in other languages, must have not left the place for a long time, and someone whose ancestors had lived in the locality. The old informants were used as anchors in determining purity in the language. With this purpose the researcher determined what vocabularies were new from the data provided by the middle and young generations.

Linguistic data were collected using a researcher-made Speech Elicitation Guide and Word Checklist. The Speech Elicitation Guide was composed of three parts: the first part was a structured oral interview using visual aids such as objects to be described and pictures or series of pictures with guide questions; the second part was a guided topical interview with stimuli ranging from relatively abstract themes but with universal appeal to formal subjects; the third part was an enumeration type of questionnaire wherein the informants were asked to name things common in their place and culture. The Word Checklist contains 260 Inabaknon lexicons taken from the Inabaknon written materials, published or unpublished. The informants were asked to check the words they use in everyday communication. In the case of old and non-reader informants, the researcher himself read the list and did the checking as they answered.

4. Results and Discussion

The Language Corpus

A total of 1,111 words were collected from the three

different groups of informants, the old, the middle and the young generations. Some of the words collected were of English origin such as *ti-shirt* (t-shirt), *tren* (train), *tayls* (tiles), *haywey* (highway), *gats* (guts), *gardin* (garden), *ag'istik* (to stick), *instant* (instant), *iskoter* (scooter), *bents* (bench), *birtdey* (birthday), *blaws* (blouse), *brad* (brod – clipped form of brother), *conbert* (convert), and *porenir* (foreigner). Everybody used these words, which implies that English is a welcome language to anybody.

Some of the words used by informants which are of Spanish origin were *pwerta mayor* (main door), *priparar* (prepare), *laguerta* (garden), *kwarto grado* (fourth grade), *abir* (an expression), *abyerta* (coat), *ariglar* (to fix), *banyo* (bathroom), *banyadiro* (a bath) and *istar* (to dwell). The old and the middle generations were the frequent users of these words implying that Spanish term will not vanish, not in a long time, from the language corpus of the Abaknons.

Samples of words which are of Tagalog origin were *a'aliw* (entertained), *agdamay* (to sympathize), *agkasundo* (in agreement), *agsi'irintindihay* (in agreement), *bagay* (to conform, to blend well), *basura* (garbage), *halimbawa* (example), *kubeta* (comfort room), *porma* (manner of dressing up), *tanggap* (accepted) and *lambing* (endearment). These words can be heard most often among the middle and young generations. This is not surprising because Capuleños are avid fanatics of Filipino movies. Aside from that, Manila, which language is Tagalog, is the place most frequently visited by the people. This shows that Tagalog has grown rapidly especially among the middle aged and the youth.

Words which are of Samarnon origin were *andoy* (wish), *ginikanan* (parents), *handom* (wish), *hingyap* (wish), *hulop* (apprehension), *pangamuyo* (prayer), *panhimaya* (prayer), *sarangputon* (someone frequently called e.g. for help), and *tambong* (attend an event). These words can be heard among the old and the middle generations.

Other words are those used to describe the new technologies which are already part of the lives of the people in the island. These words are *cellphone*, *email*, *selfie*, *groupie*, *blog*, *messenger*, *facebook*, *tweeter*. These words are commonly heard among the young generations.

Words used to describe some new natural phenomena or the effects of these are also part of the collection. Examples of these words are *storm surge*, *global warming*, *climate change*. These words can be heard among the middle and the young generations.

Variations in the Lexicon of the Three Generations

Commonly Used Words

The biggest number of word collected was common among the three generations. It totaled 664 or 59.77 percent. This data show that the majority of the words in Inabaknon are still common and used by the Abaknon people of all ages.

Words Known Only to the Old Generation

Sixty six or 5.94 percent of the words were known only to the old generation. This shows that the old generation used words which the other two groups did not know or use. Most of these words are of Spanish and Samaron loan words. This is not surprising because they grew up while Spanish was a very popular language and Samaron was the language of the church in the dioceses in Samar. The church had a heavy influence on the Inabaknon. Aside from the fact that Samaron is the language used in the proclamation of the word of God, the priests assigned in the island speak the Samaron language. Some of the words which are loaned from Spanish are *abyerta* (coat), *antigo* (antique), *kamisadentro* (undershirt), *anminyar* (to swerve), *dispwis* (then, afterwards), *pruwa* (front), *pwerte* (good, nice), *ridor* (surroundings), *ariglar* (to fix), *aturgar* (to take care), *banyadiro* (bath), *bayolar* (to violate), *istar* (to dwell), *karsel* (prison) and *tratar* (treat). The words which are loaned from Samaron are *aning'ing* (to hear unintentionally), *butang-butang* (to accuse falsely), *dung'aw* (to visit, to peek), *katungayuran* (essence), and *pasahi'* (an expression).

Words Known Only to the Middle Generation

Sixteen or 1.44 percent of the words collected were known only to the middle generation. Most of these words are English and Samaron loan words. Some of these words are *limas* (consumed), *paningkamot* (efforts), *tindog* (stand), *andoy* (wish), *aconbert* (converted), *agfityur* (featured), *agfokus* (to focus), *ag'improb* (improved), *akadyads* (judged), and *ag'istik* (to stick). They got these words by going to other places, from school and talking to different kinds of people who speak different languages, and in school.

Abaknons by nature are travelers, they trade at the nearby towns that use other languages, and they earn higher education from other places. At present, Abaknons can be found in any part of the globe. Such facts proved true the thought of Fasold which says that those who leave their community, live for a year or two in a different city, and return to their birthplace are capable of acquiring certain aspects of the speech of the community they moved to [6]. When they return, say after acquiring a college degree from other places, they can reactivate their very own language. Inter marriages also bring changes in the language. This is true if the Abaknon who marries somebody from other places now resides in his/her spouse's place. For which case s/he shall have a chance to adopt his/her partner's language. In some cases also, it is the partner who gets to adopt the Inabaknon language.

This difference in the language of the middle generation disaffirms Larson's idea that immigrants are the ones bringing changes in the language [7]. In the island of Capul, outsiders are always the ones adopting the language.

Words Known Only to the Young Generation

Fifteen or 1.35 percent of the words collected were known only to the young generation. These words are English and Tagalog loan words. These words were brought to the language through the speakers' exposure to the different technological media, from school, the environment, and their friends. New learning in school, new style in fashion and the latest development in the technologies contribute to the development of language. The words *selfon* (cellphone), *hip hap* (hip hop), *instant*, *iskoter* (scoter), *agsi'irintindihay* and *agsi'urunawa'ay* (Tagalog: to be in mutual understanding), *banding* (bonding), *barin* (barren), *kulungan* (prison cell), *agtanggap* (Tagalog: to accept), and *bitin* (Tagalog: still wanting), *kafeelingan* (adj. assuming), are proofs of this.

Along this thought is the idea of Crowley[8] which said that new words are introduced in the vocabulary of the people because of the need to talk about new things that come into their lives. Thus came the words like *aplayanses* (appliances), TV, *selfon* (cell phone), hip hop, instant, email, website, blog, messenger, and facebook and words to describe new natural phenomena like climate change and global warming.

With these findings it can be inferred that old words slowly fade out but new words introduced are easily adopted and accepted in the language.

Lexical Variations among the Three Generations

There are words which are common among the old and middle generations. This means that the young generation had other terms for them. Here are some of the examples:

Table 1. Examples of words common among two generations.

Old Generation	Middle Generation	Young Generation	Gloss
abiso	abiso	pakatu'an	notice
addangan	addangan	dangan	expression
ag'unong	ag'unong	agdamay	to sympathize
agmakuri, agmasakit	agmakuri, agmasakit	mammatayon	dying
aluton	aluton	pannukon	firewood
angan-angan	angan-angan	antahak	to wait
disidir	interes	interes	to decide
istampa	istampa	picture	picture of a saint
ka'angayan	ka'angayan	mahalap	good
kulyada	kulyada	bagyo	storm

The variation in the vocabulary of the young generation from the old and middle generations is not due to what McFarland[9] stated that children never get enough examples to provide for all possible situations, thus they are forced to use language in new situations which they have never been able to observe, but rather due to what Aitchison[10] believes that children are exposed to another more fashionable and socially useful language in school,

thus the variation. Why do the youth have to say *adda yukot* if they can be understood if they use *mil* or the English equivalent “one thousand”? To them the Tagalog term *agkasurundo* (to ameliorate) is more fashionable and innovative than the old and middle generations’ *agsisarabutay*.

Moreover, there were words the younger generation used that the old folk considered incorrect because children would shorten some expressions. Some of these words are *liwat – lat* (also), *kita kam – kitam* (ourselves, we), *hamok – hak* (only). This is due to a factor which Fromkin and Rodman called the “imperfect” learning of the adult dialect by the children.[11]

There are also words which are common only among middle and young generations. This means that the old generation used other terms. The word *ga’i* (no, not), is *angga’i* to the old generation; *angabuyon* (to agree) is *angalagad* to the old generation; the Spanish loan *aturgar* (to take charge) is *asikaso* to the old generation; *banyadiro* (name of a spring in the island) to the old generation is either *banyadiro* or *banhadiruhan* to the middle and young generations.

There were English words which the middle and young generations included in their vocabulary. These were highway, birthday, grade four and private. The old generation used *tinampo* (feeder road), *kumpli’anyo* (birthday), *kwarto grado* (fourth grade) and *pribada* (private). Words used with the introduction of new technologies like the cellphone, the computer, and the social media were among the words commonly used by the middle and the young generations. They also adapted the words used to describe some natural phenomena which are only happening and being observed at present.

The middle and young generations were fond of word clipping, some of these were *adaw* (*abadaw*) (ouch, expression of pain), *gyapon* (*gihapon*) (also) and *inanto* (*ina’anto*) (now).

There are words which the middle generation shared with both the old and the young generations. These were *ginikanan* (parents, ancestors), *kantor* (singer), *kisame* (ceiling), *klaro* (clear), *pakattan* (earthen cooking pot), *magnikit* (attached), *tapos* (done, finished) and *pwira* (except). These findings mean that the middle generation adapted most of their vocabularies from both the old and the young generations. This affirms Labov’s finding on dialect borrowing – that middle generation borrowed some forms from their parents and some from their children.[12]

There were also lexical entries which were not commonly used by the three generations. Each group had a different word to refer to the same thing. Some of these are:

Table 2. Variations in the words used by the three generations

Old	Middle	Young	Gloss
kustumri	gawi’	batasan	customs, manner, habit
a’ a-na	tahu’an-na	tauhan-na	his assistant, personnel
awinan	winan	Win	there (pointing to something)
agoy	agi	Adoy	an expression of pain
abinar	pasabot	pakatu’an	notice
allingun-ko	lingun-ko	ling-ko, long ko	“I said”

The young generation had the most number of absent Inabaknon vocabularies. Some of these were words that they understood but were no longer active in their vocabulary. Some of these words were *kubaw* (ridge roll), *karsel* (prison cell), *labihan* (most especially), *laktasan* (low barrier in a fence providing an entry place), *lumpak* (flank of thigh), *lumbiya* (kind of a tree), *pantaw* (porch), *pagbo* (truss), *sangpit* (to ask politely for something), *saramulyo* (commotion), *yukbo’* (to bow), *purtahan* (door) and *putpot* (firewood). There were also some words which were already unintelligible to the youth like the words *kayungkong* (to hang), *munanong* (to look with curiosity), *pahunaw* (a celebration after child delivery), *tangig* (a fragrant flower), *pana’uli’* (a leaf included in a bathed of lukewarm water, one week after a woman has given birth), *laktod* (short cut), *lakundong* (a basket used as tobacco container), and *bulalong* (a tree).

However there were also words absent in the old generation’s vocabulary. Some of these were English loan words and those brought about by the media, the new technologies and words used to describe new environmental phenomena.

It can be inferred from the data that there are already a lot of Inabaknon lexicon common among the old and middle generations which are becoming extinct due to non-usage of the youth.

On the whole, the variations in the language between and among the three generations of speakers were very much evident in the Inabaknon lexicon. As already mentioned in the above cited findings, there were variations in the vocabulary between the old, the middle and the young generations. The adverb *dispwis* (then, afterwards, later) to the old generation was *katapos* to the middle generation and *mangno* to the young generation. The old folk if they were relaxing, were “*aghapi-hapi*”, an adaptation of the English “happy”, the middle generation said “relaxation” while the young were “*agrelaks*”. “*Kustumri*” (custom or habit) was to the old folk, as “*gawi*” was to the middle-aged, and “*batasan*” was to the young.

Although this study supports Trudgill's [13] point of view, it also, on the other hand, disaffirms his thought that children do not speak like their parents. Parents' and children's age gap is not really big. Children talk to their parents, and they hear them speak and respond to what their parents tell them to do. In other words when they communicate, there is an understanding between and among them and so sharing in the vocabulary is happening. There is the sharing between the old and the middle and middle and young generations.

The old and middle generations knew *almanaki* (calendar), *angay* (fit, apt), *anggana'* (poor), *pinsada* (thinking, memory), *ara'udan* (coconut grater), *angumpurmi* (to conform), *mapaddi puho'* (sick), *nabidad* (Christmas), *panhop* (lotion), *pamada (gel)*, *pustura* (posture, gait, appearance), *alkoba* (ceiling), and *sulat* (hole) but the young generation only knew *kalindaryo*, *bagay*, *pobre*, *huna'-huna'*, *kaguran*, *angabuyon*, *maburong*, *pasko*, *lusyong*, *dyel (gel)*, *porma*, *siling (ceiling)* and *luhang*.

The old and the young generations did not have common words. There was a great difference in their vocabulary. This is realistic because they already have a big age gap. There were cases wherein the youth did not understand their grandparents. There were words they used which were unintelligible to the youth like *bingkil* (quarrel), *himyon* (reconciliation), *denayk* (canoe), *eskusya* (shirt), *kapipi'* (small basket), *lu'oba* (kind), *lungbo'* (bamboo water container), *makangangalos* (fearful), *orim'ot* (a sea shell), *palahot* (to include), *palihi'on* (superstitious belief), *ridoma* (a small bottle), *si'apo* (eventhough), *kupla* (to start), *tangkil* (to attach cloth to another by sewing), *tringkiti* (small sailboat), *trubenays* (long sleeved shirt), *pursuso* (close relative), *rangbong* (a handful), *dalig* (flat root of a big tree), and *alid'agid* (nearly similar).

With the above cited findings this study strongly supports the theory of lexical diffusion which holds that the basic unit of change is the word. If there is a change in the culture or the way of life of the people, their language is the first one to be affected.

5. Conclusions

There are variations in the lexicon between and among the three generations of Inabaknon speakers. There are words which are known only to the old folk, there are also words which only the middle-aged use and in the same manner, there are also words known only to the young generation.

The most number of words in Inabaknon are common and are used by the three generations. The old folk have the most number of unique words than the other two generations. Most of these words have been loaned from Spanish and Samaron. The middle generation has a lesser number of unique words than the old generation, and most

of these words are loans from English, Samaron and Tagalog. Most of the words they use are shared with the old and the young generations. The young generation has unique words loaned either from English and Tagalog.

However, the members of the young generation do not know or at least do not use most of the Inabaknon lexicon. They are surrounded with the different technological media which strongly influence their language.

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