

Denotation, Connotation, and Myth in Indigenous Songs: A Semiotic Analysis of Subanen Chants

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Abstract

Indigenous Subanen culture and tradition have deteriorated slowly with the changing times. The Subanen community of Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines is betwixt in between when it comes to embracing modern lifestyle, traditional practices and beliefs. This can be mirrored by songs and chants. Their indigenous songs and chants are intangible artifacts that need to be understood and preserved. As this study employed a qualitative research method, its contention was to scrutinize and explore the salient patterns in their indigenous chants, specifically the English-translated Subanen chants, through semiotic-based analysis by employing linguistic analysis in the context of denotation, connotation, and myth to understand the Subanen messages and how they were embodied in their time-tested culture. The researchers painstakingly gathered leisure chant excerpts from their epics, library records, and local interviews. The chants use linguistic signs and symbols that connote different qualities and glare pictures of the Subanen culture. Hence, the researchers used a map of signification as the basis for extracting meaning from the gathered chants. It was found that these chants signify the knit-kept history of the Subanen tribe and their beliefs, aspirations, and legal practices. Finally, the researchers produced a module that incorporates Subanen chants as a pedagogical tool to help its preservation and to contribute to the learners' meaning-making skills in school.

Keywords: *Chants and Songs, Cultural Preservation, Subanen chants, Semiotic analysis*

Introduction

It has been apparent that the indigenous tradition is quickly dying out with the passing of its keepers and losing interest to the younger generation. The goal of conserving the rich Filipino heritage becomes broader in scope. But even with the great collection of folk stories, speeches, and songs, it seems difficult to close the gaps between the past and the present. Therefore, the researcher ventured the incorporation of these indigenous memorabilia in linguistics and in the pedagogy as well. Indigenous songs embody not only the culture of a particular community, but also how its people utilize their language to communicate or convey their stories, emotions, and beliefs. Indigenous chants, like any other songs, is a form of text considered as a connected discourse. This would mean that the lyrics may signify beyond its explicit text.

Therefore, this research used the science of signs, Semiotics, to scrutinize these songs. Semiotics focuses on the form of words, colors, images, sounds, gestures, objects, and, as quoted from Barthes *Mythologies*, their “significations apart from their content”. In other words, Semiotics studies how meaning is constructed and understood through signs. Semiotic analysis of songs contributes to the essential goal of language learning which is for students to be motivated and equipped to function well within the target language (L2), while incorporating the culture beyond the classroom. This can then be used as a pedagogical tool for students to better comprehend and interpret the linguistic and sociocultural context of authentic texts (lyrics of the Subanen songs).

It is on this regard that the contention of this study is to scrutinize and explore the patterns of indigenous music, specifically English-translated Subanen songs, through semiotic analysis by employing the role of denotation, connotation, and myth to understand their messages and how they embody the Subanen culture. As an output, the researcher produced a module incorporating analysis of Subanen songs to be used as a pedagogical tool. This research may then contribute to the field of Applied Linguistics, Philippine folklore; and hopefully attract scholarly attention on the rare concepts of signs and linguistic myth. This study was conducted within the span of four months between the academic year of 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 of St. Michael’s College, Iligan City.

Objectives of the Study

The research is focused on exploring the denotation, connotation, and myth of eminent songs of the Subanen tribe, through a semiotic analysis. The signification of these chants were laid out as foundation for the development of a pedagogical tool for the intention of preserving these indigenous memorabilia and at the same time contribute to learners’ meaning-making skills.

Specifically, the main objective of this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the most renowned songs of the Subanen tribe? (2) How are the denotation, connotation, and myth employed in the Subanen songs? (3) How do these linguistic signs and symbols reflect the culture of the Subanen tribe? (4) What pedagogical tool can be developed from these Subanen songs?

2.0 Methods

This analysis used a qualitative descriptive method to analyze texts, particularly English-translated lyrics of Subanen chants, and scrutinize its use of words and the meaning it entails. Particularly, a semiotic process was employed for the production, transmission, and interpretation of meaning represented symbolically in signs and messages, primarily but not exclusively in language (Mingers & Willcocks, 2016). This study goes beyond traditional qualitative research as it also utilizes interpretative content analysis, in which researchers go beyond quantifying the most straightforward denotative elements in a text (Koppa, 2010). Data

gathering took place in Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur, where the Subanen tribe has been thriving throughout the years. The municipality has 26 barrios with predominantly Subanen inhabitants due to its ethnic origin. Data was gathered through an immersion in Lapuyan where the Subanen chants were collected and the tribe’s culture, history, and lifestyle were explored. Research also took place in the archives of Museo de Oro of Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City to delve deeper into the Subanen tribe’s identity as well as their epics.

The researcher utilized Roland Barthes’ map of sign functioning as a semiotic tool. It is a key instrument to ensure that the intended meanings are unambiguously understood (Sign Salad, 2021). This instrument was used to graphically analyse the signs from the lyrics of Subanen songs according to its denotation, connotation, and myth.

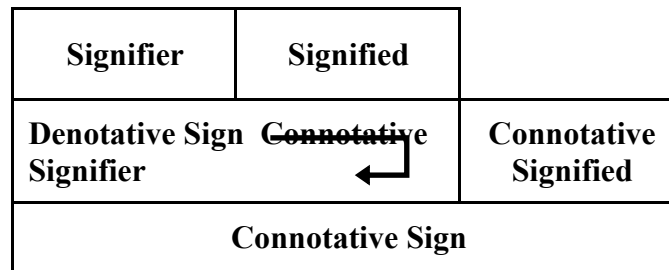


Figure 1. Map of Sign Functioning
 (adopted from Barthes as cited by Margianti & Sari, 2020)

Figure 1 shows the research instrument that was used for semiotic analysis to identify the denotation, connotation, and myth of the Subanen songs through signs/signification of these songs. The denotative sign is produced by the signifier and signified. The denotative sign is then considered as the connotative signifier on the second level of the semiotic system and will produce the connotative signified, which will in turn produce the connotative sign. This semiotic process is systematic and will embody the language myth of these songs.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Results and findings of the study are presented chronologically based on the objectives of the study as presented therein.

The Most Renowned Songs of the Subanen Tribe

The five (5) Subanen songs that the researcher used for semiotic analysis are Dlonli, Phatedil, and excerpts from the epics Guinguman and Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan. Hereafter, the aforementioned Subanen chants will be thoroughly discussed according to their origin and pertinence.

a. Dlonli

As this folk song is sung in sembangay, which means proverbs in the Subanen language, Dlonli is related to the Japanese poetry with 7 syllables called Tanka. The origin or the composer of this Dlonli is unidentified on account of it purely sustaining through the years as a leisure chant the Subanens sing while harvesting, which pans out to Subanen children learning it from their farmer parents. Thus, its etymology is generally from the Lumad Subanen of Lapuyan. This song is basically a leisure song that is sung during harvest and apparently, the term “dlonli” is nothing more than an expression, which entails that the term does not have a direct translation. Its lyrics starts off with a phrase exhibiting onomatopoeia and symbolism, followed by sentiments of appreciation to the Subanen parents.

Dlonli
Gbe'ti salumaya
Yami helon gem'bata
Tinuran nami siba
Su' nga gbetad te'gana
Gba' genda na sina' sya 'Ma
Gbalen nami pusaha,

(lonli
A snap from makahiya
We, all of us here children
We were all taught good things
Teachings from the ancestors
If Mom and Dad all be demised
It'll be a great legacy

Dlonli
Tubig sapa Dlepuyan
Su' helon tintuluan
Tago o' rin pihilan
Ba be'leng na nga Megulang
Sumukli o' gindegan
Dlonli

Lonli
Flowed like Lapuyan River
All of the great teachings
They're all hidden in my mind
If all parents may all die
We represent the next generation
Lonli)

b. Phatedil

This chant is similar with Dlonli in many ways. It is related to the Japanese Tanka and its etymology or composer is unknown. The term phatedil is also considered as an expression with which it does not have any equivalent translation. Basically, Phatedil originated from the Lumad Subanen of Lapuyan. This chant is performed during courtship. Marriage in the early Subanen can either follow the “buya” system, where the parents arrange and find partners for their children, or the normal type of marriage, where courting happens between two Subanen people with mutual romantic feelings for each other. The latter type of marriage requires wooing or engagement; thus the use of the Phatedil chant during courtship rituals.

DilDil
anana te' dil o' run
Manok, Manok gbe'haha
Pe'gapun ritu panga'
Dlelayun peketawa
Pe'ngumandyag de'laga
Anana te' dil o' run

(Dildil
There is a saying
A little kingfisher bird
Sitting on top of a branch
Seeing smiling all the time
Watching pretty young ladies
And there it goes all along

Dil Dil
Anana te' dil' o run
Munsala genalana
Delaga pe'ngingata'
Gbe' guta-o kin la'ma
Pedleguyud munsala
Sedlayen ritu gbaga
Lyaganen menginsawa
Anana te' dil o' run

Dil dil
Another saying to say
A perfumed lil' handkerchief
And lady in riverbank
Approached by a young fine man
Handing her a handkerchief
Bringing onto her shoulder
Likes marrying her
And there it goes all along)

c. Guinguman

The epic Guinguman originated in Dumalinao, Zamboanga del Sur, but is also adopted in Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur as a historical epic reflecting the yore of the Subanen people. It has 11 episodes and 4,062 lines that narrate the conflict between good and evil, and particularly dwells on the concept of war and invasion in the Kingdom of Mount Dliyagn before

shifting to the Kingdom of Pagkatolongon. The epic Guinguman was usually performed after war where Subanen tribe men gather for celebration and festivities. This is also performed during Buklog, a communal thanksgiving ritual that the Subanen people still celebrate to this day. The following are excerpts of the Guinguman that will be used for semiotic analysis:

(Guman: 3003 - 3031)

“...in case you didn’t know
the kingdom Dliya’g’n
and kingdom Paktologon
woven in their creation is evil
by the creator of the earth.
It is said that if the land
Has no trouble
The kingdom shall have no fame
Without desolation
The kingdom shall not be known.
In the days passed
While I was a young man

Along I fought against the enemies
Of our kingdom.
In same way also
The lone man Manongaling
When he was young
Along he defended his
Kingdom Paktologon.
However, although we were only
two
Not once did we encounter
Defeat or surrender
Our bodies and lives.”

(Guman: 1471 - 1481)

“let go of your kampilan
for you will carry to thy kingdom
only my dead body
because if you force me
if against my desire

it is better to die
better to pass away
than become subject of story
subject of story and song
In all the kingdoms...”

d. Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan

The epic Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan originated in the Sindangan Bay of Zamboanga Peninsula. It is about the exploits of supernatural hero Taake, and the series of conflicts between the kingdom of Sirangan and other kingdoms. The wars mounted from the resentment of the chieftains from the kingdom of Keboklagan over his courtship with their Lady Pintawan and other kingdoms became involved in the fighting as the battles progressed. Taake leads the Sirangan leaders in their victory over the other chiefs, but there have been too many deaths which made Asog, the supreme being, upset. Asog descends to Earth, commands the combatants to put an end to their battle and hold a *buklog*, to which he promised every warrior a life partner. The saga ends with Asog fanning the kingdoms and resurrecting all those who died during the battles. The epic Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan encompasses 7,590 verses, and is also performed during *buklog*. Below is an excerpt from Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan, documented in “The Folklore of the Subanuns” by Gaudiosa Ochotorena.

“Then his dowry he gave,
This datu of Sirangan,
Seventy long gonsoq
Also the people
On the other side of Sirangan.
And Tomitib Manaon
Did the same.
Here the Muslims mixed,

By intermarriage–
With the Subanuns”

Denotation, Connotation, and Myth in the Subanen Chants

A. Dlonli

- Denotative Sign:
 - A makahiya plant breaks.
 - The Subanen children are taught by their parents with teachings from their ancestors.
 - The teachings will be the parents’ legacy when they die.
- Connotative Sign: This connotes breaking the practice of birth control because the Subanen children are taught well by their parents, with teachings that came from their ancestors. This reflects the family system. When the time comes where the parents die, these teachings will live on as their legacy. This connotes the oral traditions passed onto generations, and the preservation of the traditional knowledge.

The makahiya plant is used as an herbal remedy by the Subanen people for birth control. A research on Healing Beliefs and Practices among Subanen and Mansaka by Valdez and Canapi (2015) claims that the root decoction of the makahiya plant has an antifertility effect which validates the Subanen use of this herb for birth control. Therefore, the findings of this research supports its symbolism of birth control. Moreover, the line: “a snap of makahiya” denotes breaking of the makahiya plant, thus, connotes breaking the practice of birth control. However, the researcher finds this ironic because according to Daligang in 1981, the Subanen tribe was claimed to be the first tribe to practice birth control.

Additionally, the Subanen household is regarded as a hub for teaching children morals and parental respect. Their primary teachers are their parents. Reading and writing were not taught to the early Subanen. However, they are able to count by using their fingers. Only traditional agricultural and forest resources are used by the Subanens. Boys were taught to supply food, while girls received instruction and orientation in domestic skills. These were all discussed in the field work research of Dr. Joy Enriquez on culture and beliefs of the Subanen people from Tigbao, a neighboring municipality of Lapuyan. This is also applied in the early Subanen community of Lapuyan where aside from being taught how to secure food and handle household responsibility, they were also taught about the stories and folktales from their ancestors.

The song Dlonli then connotes the idea that even though their teachers, the Subanen parents, may pass away, their teachings will never falter and will continue to be passed onto the following generations. The knowledge and skills their children have acquired from them will serve as their legacy.

B. Phatedil

- Denotative Sign:
 - A kingfisher bird is looking at a pretty and young lady on a riverbank.
 - The man brought with him a perfumed handkerchief to court a lady who is in the riverbank.
- Connotative Sign: This song connotes courtship where a man is looking at young and pretty ladies in the riverbank, searching for someone to propose marriage to. He found a pretty lady in the riverbank and approached her with a handkerchief to lay it on her shoulder and ask her hand in marriage. This act reflects one of the Subanen courtship practices.

This song connotes a story of a man planning to court a pretty lady he saw in a riverbank. The kingfisher bird is called *gbehaha* in Subanen. The kingfisher is used as a symbol or metaphor for a man searching, or in avian terminology, “hunting”, for a lady to court.

The handkerchief or *gmunsala* is used for courtship in the Subanen culture. When a lady accepts a handkerchief from a suitor, this would mean she accepts being in a relationship with him. “It is a proof of a mutual understanding and a basis even of a marriage,” according to the researcher’s informant. Moreover, this song is indeed used for courtship as it also relates to the courtship dance called *sabay*, or *galay*, or the act of *pangalay* (Cultural Center of the Philippines). This courtship dance uses a handkerchief or a *gmunsala* where by the time the female dancer is caught by the male dancer’s *gmunsala* by either laying it on her shoulder or striking her chest with it, it will show that the female is metaphorically caught by the male. This act ends the courtship dance.

C. Guinguman Excerpt (3003 – 3031)

- Denotative Sign:
 - The creator made the kingdoms Dliyang’n and Paktologon fight evil on purpose.
 - The wars and struggles of a kingdom makes it known and acknowledged.
 - Young Datu Pomban’wa and young Datu Manongaling defended their kingdoms.
 - They never surrendered even though it was just two of them against the conquistadors.
- Connotative Sign: This excerpt of the epic connotes how the tribulations happen to their kingdom because God destined them to fight evil. They take pride in these struggles as they are recognized from it. This signifies the identities of Subanen who struggled with conquistadors as well. The datu Pomban’wa and Manongaling are brave and steadfast in fighting the same enemy for their individual kingdoms, albeit overpowered, reflecting the brave Subanens.

The *guinguman* or *guman* is known as the epic that reflects the origins of the Subanen. This epic is basically about the struggle between the characters against the same evil enemies who want to conquer their kingdoms. In this epic, Pailalam de Bolak asked Datu Pomban’wa a question why tribulations occur, and these lines from the excerpt were his response. Both the kingdoms of Dliyang’n and Pagkatolongon struggled with the same problem of oppression. This connotes the idea that the kingdoms’ struggles against evil is fate. But what kind of creator makes a kingdom suffer from oppression on purpose? “*Without desolation, the kingdom shall not be known.*” These lines explain why their “fated” to struggle against evil; these kingdoms are practically fated to be known. A peaceful kingdom does not get recognized as much as one that goes through wars and tribulations. Chaos makes a kingdom become known or acknowledged in history.

This reflects how the Subanens experienced invasion and oppression in the past, and how they take pride on how their ancestors prevailed. Ivie Carbon Esteban, a literary folklorist, refers *guinguman* as the “epic of Lapuyan”; but this epic is also preserved by other neighboring Subanen communities of the Zamboanga Peninsula such as Kumalarang and Dumalinao. This is because this epic is used among Subanen groups to narrate the origins of their people. They consider it as an “oral testimony of their ancestors’ struggle for life and survival in Thubig Dliyagen”. This was the same Dliyang’n which was the oppressed kingdom in the said epic. Subanens struggled from the oppression of the early Muslims. This excerpt also denotes how Datu Pomban’wa of Dliyang’n and Datu Manongaling of Paktologon both fought for their individual kingdoms from three evil and jealous queens who wanted the said kingdoms to become theirs. The two defenders of the two kingdoms fought for their land and never

surrendered even though they were outnumbered. Even though these characters have supernatural powers, their human attributes are not concealed because they also tire out, weaken, and suffer. This connotes bravery, heroism, and steadfastness of the characters. It clearly relates to the Subanen ancestors who, according to Mrs. Esterlinda Mendoza-Malagar who translated the *guinguman* to the English language, are “peace-loving people but once provoked, they fight to the death”.

D. Guinguman Excerpt (1471 – 1481)

- Denotative Sign:
 - The man should give up.
 - The maiden would rather kill herself than be part of their history that will be told in different lands
- Connotative Sign: This excerpt of the *guinguman* connotes the value of bravery and steadfastness because the character implied that the warrior should give up because he will never get to take her to his kingdom alive, and that she would rather die than be part of the success stories in their history, which will be talked about in all kingdoms. This connotes the bravery and steadfastness of Subanen women and the passing on of oral traditions.

This is another excerpt of *guinguman* and just one of the many tensions in this epic where they had to fight for their honor. The women of this epic are just as brave and devoted to fight for their kingdom especially if their honor is at stake. These female characters were also warriors and one of them is the maiden Pagl’lokon.

A *kampilan* is a single-edged sword used by skilled Subanen warriors in the past. The line denotes letting go of the sword, which in turn connotes giving up. In the context of this excerpt of *guinguman*, the maiden Pagl’lokon was asked by the opponent to go with him to his kingdom and this excerpt was her response. She implied how the man should give up trying to take her with him to his kingdom because he would only be bringing her dead body with him. Why so? In the following lines, it is denoted that she would rather die than be taken by this man to his kingdom. This was how steadfast the maiden was, just like every masculine hero of this epic. If the man forces her to go with him to his kingdom, she would rather kill herself than become a topic of their history. This shows an interconnection between the connotations from the previous *guinguman* excerpt about how tribulations make a kingdom become known. Obtaining her would be considered as a tribulation and if they successfully take her to their kingdom, the enemies will take pride in it and this will be known to all kingdoms, through their stories and oral traditions. This shows how the character is so firm on not being involved at all with their triumph, or making sure they do not triumph at all.

This once again speaks a lot about how the Subanen people are very steadfast and brave when it comes to their honor and sense of pride. “The women would rather die than be dishonored or be married against their will.” This was according to Esterlinda Mendoza-Malagar, who translated the epic *guinguman* for the world.

E. Excerpt of *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan*

- Denotative Sign:
 - Taake and other datus gave their dowries.
 - Muslims and Subanens went through intermarriage.
- Connotative Sign: This Subanen song connotes a happy ever after where the conflict between rivaling kingdoms are resolved with an intermarriage. The song signifies the origin of *kalibugans* that is existing in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

This excerpt is the denouement of the famous folk epic *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan* or Kingdom of Keboklagan. The preceding conflicts that happened in in the song denoted many

conflicts and struggles between the rivaling kingdoms, particularly the Muslims from the kingdom of Keboklagan and the Subanens from the Kingdom of Sirangan. However, in this particular excerpt, communion took place as a resolution to the problem. This was done through intermarriage between the Subanens and the Muslims, where everyone was given partners to wed as a blessing from the supreme being.

The excerpt clearly connotes peace and communion, as well as the origin of *kalibugans*. The *kalibugans* are people who are descendants produced from the intermarriage between Subanens and Muslims. They are basically referred to as mixed-breeds, usually due to the said intermarriage or voluntary conversion.

The history between the two ethnic groups was not exactly pleasant; The Muslims were known to have subjugated Subanen people in the worst ways possible. The Subanen also became mountain dwellers to avoid the aggressive Moro people who lived in the coastal areas of Zamboanga del Sur. The conflict between Subanens and the Muslims in the past marked a significant part of the Subanens' history and culture. It either established a negative view of Subanens to the Muslims because of the harassment they experienced, or a positive one where communion between the rivaling groups took place. The epic *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan* clearly demonstrates the ramification of conflict due to prejudice, and signifies the experience of the early Subanen people of Zamboanga del Sur.

Reflection of Linguistic Signs and Symbols to the Subanen Tribe

These linguistic signs and symbols from the different folk songs of the Subanen tribe embody their culture, history, identity, and values as an indigenous community. This was clearly manifested in the songs that were gathered and analysed, both in the Subanen epics and the leisure songs or chants.

From the analysis attained, the researcher concluded that the early Subanen, just like other lumads, had their own belief system such as the belief of diwata or gods as creators; as reflected in the epic *Guinguman*. They used to hold rituals and communal gatherings in adherence to their gods (Prabhakar & Gangadhar, 2011) as pagans and as a tribe practicing animism as their religion. The most known Subanen celebration is called *Buklog*, which is still being practiced these days by different Subanen communities, even the modernized areas. This celebration was also mentioned as the “happy ending” of the epic *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan* where each person present was given a partner as part of the celebration. They hold *Buklog* for various functions such as for thanksgiving, or to pray for health and abundance of harvest.

The concept of religion in the Subanen community of Lapuyan marked a drastic effect throughout history. According to the etymology of the Lapuyan, the Moros began a huge and coerced conversion to Islam in the latter half of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th. The Subanens, however, resisted the Moros and maintained their pagan beliefs; quite similar to how the protagonists in the epics *Guinguman* and *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan* were signified. The Subanen fighters of Lapuyan were bolstered by cousins of Thimuay Ahaten and Thimuay Reho who were commanders from Danao (Lakewood). They established an upcamp at Mogusan close to the mouth of the Kumalarang River. The Subanens upheld animism as their religion and disapproved of Islam which was also expressed in the conflict signified between the Moros and the Subanens in the *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan* epic. The conflict ended with the intermarriage between the Subanen protagonist and the Muslim maiden. This embody a reconciliation between the two ethnic groups and the rise of *Kalibugans*; the descendants of intermarriage between Subanen and Muslim. This instance in folklore and literature also reflects the reality today, where more and more *kalibugans* now exist in Zamboanga del Norte.

The Subanens have managed their own affairs in accordance with Subanen norms and customs throughout and after their conflict. The American missionaries Reverend and Mrs. David Lund taught Christianity to the Subanen leader during the reign of Thimuay Imbing in the early 19th century. After their arrival in 1912, Reverend and Mrs. Samuel D. Lamasson carried on the work of Christian missionaries that led to the founding of the Lamasson Bible School, the first Bible school in the Peninsula which started off as a Tribal Bible School. At that point, Subanens converted to Christianity. Interestingly, this also led to a nickname that Lapuyan was given, which is “Little America”, because of the American missionaries that came in the community. In the present day, the said school is still well established in Lapuyan. This influenced the upsurge of the mentioned evangelical group, CAMACOP Alliance (Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines), which is the religion that majority of the Subanens embrace in Lapuyan these days.

The etymology of religion of the early Subanen people also gave us a gist of the tribulations that the tribe went through. The epics *Guinguman* and *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan* emphasize on the struggles of the characters from conquistadors and other forces of evil. This was a manifestation of the Subanen’s history with their own share of conquistadors in their history, including the aggressive Magindanao Datus and Maranaos from Lanao who dwelt along the Lapuyan coastline. According to the municipality’s historical profile, they were frequently harassed or attacked by the aforementioned groups. The Maguindanao datus used to extort tributes from them, while the Maranaos would capture Subanens and sold them as slaves. These were the reasons why the Subanens moved by the riverbanks upstream. This is why they are called Subanens; derived from the word “suba” because they dwell by the riverbanks.

The family system and practices are also reflected through the linguistic signs of these Subanen songs, particularly on courtship, wedding, and valuing the members of a household. The signs in the courtship song *Phatedil* explains the nonverbal cues of asking a woman’s hand in marriage. This is explained further in Mrs. Esterlinda-Mendoza Malagar’s paper on the “Suban-on Epic and its Significance to their Changing World: Suban-on Love, Courtship, and Marriage”. Courtship and love is interesting as there are nonverbal cues that supplement the interest of the Subanen man and woman to each other, such as the use of handkerchiefs which was implied in the linguistic signs of the song *Phatedil*. The early Subanen men practiced polygamy where they can marry as many girls as they can handle. If they get married out of parental agreement, the man has to prove himself worthy first. A dowry is involved, which is also signified in the epic *Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagan* in the line: “*Then his dowry he gave, This datu of Sirangan*”. A traditional Subanen marriage ceremony is a “long-winded affair” which is sometimes held for a number of days. The family system also reflects the staple Filipino adherence to the elders. Their home is considered as the center of learning values and respect for elders and parents. Parents were their immediate teachers, which was also signified in the song *Dlonli*. The way the teachings were passed on from generations to generations was also connoted in the said song, comparing it to the Lapuyan River or the *sapa Dlepuyan*; which was an integral part of the Subanen history and culture.

3.1 Rationale

The researcher crafted a set of learning modules as a pedagogical tool based on the incorporation of the analysis of indigenous Subanen songs. This may eventualize sustainable and efficient preservation of indigenous songs, and at the same time promulgate information about the Subanen ethnic group to the younger generations, whilst developing their meaning-making skills. The modules vary in target learners and subjects in accordance to the competencies appropriate to the incorporation of indigenous song analysis.

Conclusions

Based on the results above, it can be concluded that the Subanen indigenous chants gathered signify the beliefs, practices, courtship, family system, and history of the Subanen community of the Zamboanga peninsula. The songs used linguistic signs and symbols that connote the different qualities of the Subanen culture, and the researcher used the map of signification to extract meaning from the gathered songs. From this, it was found that Dlonli denotes the breaking of a makahiya plant and acquiring knowledge from Subanen parents; and it connotes the breaking of the practice of birth control to pass on traditional knowledge to the following generations. Phatedil on the other hand, denotes a kingfisher bird watching pretty maidens in the riverbank and the man bringing a perfumed handkerchief to the maiden; and it connotes the Subanen courtship practice. The excerpts from Guinguman denotes how the kingdoms Dliya'g'n and Paktologon were destined with evil, as well as the brave and steadfast characteristics of the Subanen people; and it connotes how the tribulations make a kingdom recognized; Lastly, the excerpt from Ag Tubig Nog Keboklagn denotes giving of dowries during an intermarriage between previously rivaling kingdoms, and it connotes communion as conflict resolution as well as the origin of kalibugans. The linguistic signs and symbols of the lyrics from the Subanen chants reflect the culture and etymology of the tribe. The researcher crafted a set of learning modules as a pedagogical tool that incorporates the analysis of Subanen indigenous chants to help develop learners' meaning-making skill, at the same time fortify the preservation of these indigenous memorabilia.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, following recommendations were drawn:

Subanen Tribe. The researcher recommends the tribal institutions to initiate production of various forms of print and electronic media of indigenous songs that can be used by educational institutions and for research purposes, as a way of preservation.

Language Teachers. The language teachers and the educational institutions that govern them should incorporate indigenous songs in their curriculum; such as for motivation in the lesson proper for elementary, and as literary texts and materials for high school.

Language Learners. The researcher recommends language learners to utilize Subanen indigenous songs and lore to develop their reading comprehension and making meaning out of linguistic signs and symbols.

Future Researchers. Future researchers are suggested to partner with educational institutions of the Subanen communities, and go through content analysis to assess the incorporation of the indigenous songs and folklore in their curriculum.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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