

Community-Based Language Development of Central Bikol

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Abstract

This research examined the language status of Central Bikol spoken in Legazpi City and used as a language of instruction in MTB-MLE. The Functions, Acquisition, Motivation, Environment, and Differentiation (FAMED) conditions identified the common factors that determine the level of language use, while the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) measured the level of language vitality. This study used purposive sampling in selecting 12 native speakers of the language. The methodology was based on the Sustainable Use Model (SUM) and, in particular, the conditions that provided a framework for evaluating the sustainability of Central Bikol. The researchers collected the data mainly from focus group discussions. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants provided additional data by answering questionnaires and phone interviews. The findings of the present study suggest that the EGIDS level for Central Bikol is 3, labeled as Wider Communication which means that the language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region. Central Bikol is generally perceived as the standard language or regional lingua franca. Further, the findings revealed that the problems to be addressed are the locals' lack of awareness of and accessibility to the written and recorded materials in Central Bikol, and the lack of support in the proliferation of literature to strengthen developing conditions.

Keywords: *Central Bikol, EGIDS, FAMED, MTB-MLE, SUM*

Introduction

The DepEd Order No. 74 s. 2009 institutionalized Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) to improve the learner outcomes in the country. However, not all of the mandated languages for MTB-MLE are the mother tongues of the pupils and teachers in some localities. The Bicol Region, for instance, has many speech varieties that are yet to be tested for mutual intelligibility. Hence, some teachers translate the provided materials written in Central Bikol to their own varieties.

Calinawagan (2020) provided three possible classroom scenarios that prove the contextualization of language programs challenging: a) majority of the students speak the community language as mother tongue (L1); b) majority of the students speak the regional lingua franca as L1 and some students speak their own community or indigenous languages as L1; and c) the students may speak a strong regional lingua franca but are more proficient in languages of wider communication, namely, Filipino and English.

Multilingualism has become a trend in modern globalized societies. Learning more than one language has proven to improve an individual's academic competence and professional status. Unfortunately, globalization threatens the survival of minority languages due to language shift in which the speakers gradually transfer to the use of prestige languages. The 19th edition of the *Ethnologue* (Lewis & Simons, 2015) reports that numerous languages are dying without our awareness. In fact, statistics show that 35% of the 7,097 languages in the world are classified as being in vigorous unwritten use. Almost 31% show a stronger level of development, while over 34% are in some stage of loss or shift. Hence, there is a greater number of dying languages than developing ones.

Bicol Region is one of the most linguistically diverse areas in the country, manifesting differences in every linguistic aspect. Many of its speech varieties remain spoken but undocumented and unwritten; hence, the need to examine them. Some of the extensive studies that examined the varieties in Bicol classified them into subgroups, such as the work of

Lobel and Tria (2000). These languages that belong to a particular subgroup are assumed to descend from a parent language. Ethnologue classifies Central Bikol as an Austronesian Malayo-Polynesian Central Philippine language spoken in many parts of the Bicol Region such as west Albay province, Legazpi area, Camarines Norte province, Camarines Sur province, southwest third of Catanduanes province, Masbate province, north Sorsogon province, and others (Eberhard et al., 2022). The Central Bikol language investigated in this study is spoken in Legazpi, which is a coastal component city in the province of Albay.

Lewis and Simons (2015) indicated that “community-based language development empowers and builds capacity in local language communities by assisting them in identifying their own holistic development goals, taking into account the relationship of identity and language to the transmission of life-crucial knowledge” (p. 35). The speech variety or varieties of a community are closely associated with their identity and traditional knowledge. Therefore, only the community can explain the bodies of knowledge that have evolved internally for many years.

Several studies in community-based language development have employed the Sustainable Use Model (SUM) and Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) by Lewis and Simons (2015) in examining the level of language use and the vitality of the language. One such study was conducted by Eberhard (2017), who described the basic structure of the “Guide for Planning the Future of Our Language,” and then explained its applications in many communities and workshops with native speakers. The author and others conducted these applications in 84 languages in Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Sao Tome e Principe, and Venezuela.

Tehan and Markowski (2017) assessed the language vitality of the So communities in Thailand using EGIDS and the SUM. Their findings showed that many So

villages manifested vigorous language vitality, while other villages were threatened by language shift. There were promising initial interventions to revitalize and develop the language. Moreover, other activities and initiatives were recommended to strengthen the vitality of the language.

According to Ethnologue, Central Bikol has an EGIDS level of 3, described as Wider Communication, which means that “the language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region” (Eberhard et al., 2022). However, these data were last updated in 2012 or a decade ago. Hence, there is a need to conduct an up-to-date investigation of this language due to the continuous developments in communication, technology, and migration that influence language status.

The theoretical framework taken in this study was based on the Sustainable Use Model (SUM). Each phase has its own specific goal, which was attained by executing the specific tasks. In the first phase, the goal was to observe the language use in the community. This was accomplished by understanding first the context of the language use, identifying the speech community, and eventually mapping the functions of the language. The resulting data from this phase gave an initial assessment of the current language ecology. In Phase 2, the goal was to assess the sustainability of the language using the EGIDS to measure the language vitality and sustainable use levels, as well as the FAMED scale to evaluate the conditions that determine its use. The resulting data from this phase identified the desired language ecology, which in turn accomplished the goal of the third and final phase, that is, to achieve sustainable use of the language. This was done by developing the desired use for the language while at the same time addressing the inadequate conditions that hamper its use through organizing various initiatives to help build the capacity and motivation among the speakers to sustain language use until it eventually reaches an ideal state in the community based on their future language ecology. See Figure 1.

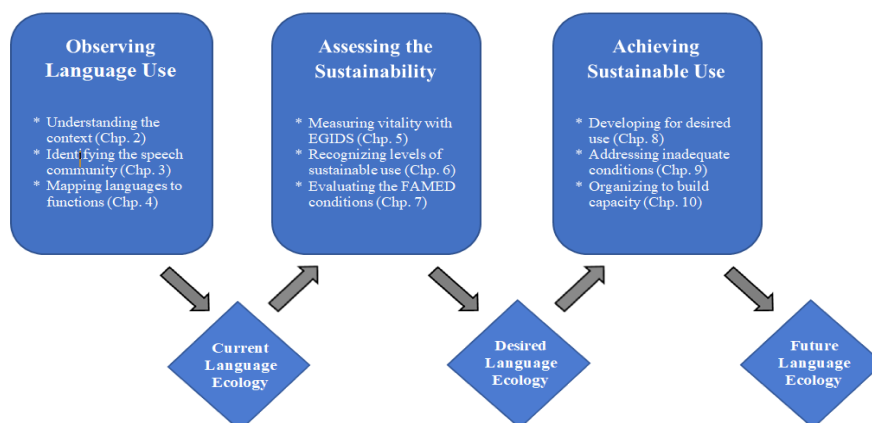


Figure 1 Sustainable Use Model (Lewis & Simons, 2015)

This research determined the language status of Central Bikol spoken in Legazpi City, Albay Province. Further, it provided opportunities for the speech community to decide on the language development that is ideal for them. Specifically, the study aimed to attain the following objectives: a) identify the factors that determine the level of language use; b) measure the level of language use and vitality; and c) develop plans of action to reinforce conditions that will likely result in a sustainable level of language use.

The impact of the present study on the Central Bikol speech community is the sustainable use of the people's language, which ensures that their local or traditional knowledge will be maintained and passed on to the next generation. While maintaining their identity, the community will also adapt to external knowledge with the development of communication and technology. In terms of language education, teachers of

MTB-MLE Bikol will directly benefit by learning the language status of the Bikol mother tongue that they teach and the significance of their role in language development. The findings will also provide the basis for the development of curriculum, syllabi, and instructional materials in Bikol language pedagogy.

Materials and Methods

The main instrument used in the study was "A Guide for Planning the Future of Our Language" by Hanawalt et al. (2016), henceforth known as Guide. The FAMED scale by Lewis and Simons (2015) identified the common factors that determine the level of language use in Central Bikol. On the other hand, Table 1 shows how the EGIDS measured the level of use and the vitality of the Central Bikol language.

Table 1 Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Lewis & Simons, 2015)

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Regional / Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

The selection of the locality was based on the classification of Bikol language varieties according to Ethnologue (Eberhard et al., 2022). Legazpi City is a major economic hub in the Bicol Region. It is a center of developments in modern technology, communication, and transportation which most likely affect the use and vitality of the local language, Central Bikol.

The selection of the participants was based on the Guide provided by Hanawalt et al. (2016). The reasonable size for the focus group discussion is 12 to 15 participants to ensure that everyone's ideas get heard. A series of meetings with a small group is recommendable instead of a long session with a large group. In view of these guidelines, the study used purposive sampling. The participants were selected through the assistance of the local government unit, specifically officials from the municipality and barangay. Communication letters were addressed to the municipality mayor and barangay captain indicating the demographics of the participants who are native speakers of the Bikol variety investigated. Moreover, the researchers observed the informed consent process by ensuring that the participants were aware that they were participating in a research study and by asking their consent to participate with the option of withdrawing anytime.

The following criteria served as bases:

- a) The participants are born and raised in the local community.
- b) The participants are native speakers of the traditional language.
- c) The participants have parents who are also from the locality and native speakers of the traditional language.
- d) The participants belong to the age bracket of 20-70 years old.
- e) The participants may have finished or reached elementary, high school, or college levels.
- f) The participants belong to different social classes.
- g) The participants are composed of community leaders and members.

The data were primarily collected from focus group discussions (FGD) conducted for two non-consecutive days. The FGDs were conducted following the Guide. The Guide contains explicit instructions on how to conduct the FGDs. It involved a number of hands-on activities such as making of community map, using venn diagrams and language charts, analyzing the mountain poster on language use, participating in focus group discussions using assessment charts (spoken, identity, and reading & writing), as well as developing action plans for the future of the community's language. Because of the enforced community quarantines, instead of the FGD, a questionnaire for the action planning was made and validated. It was administered either by the researchers or a focal person. Phone interviews were also done as follow-up.

Results And Discussion

The discussion of the findings follows the objectives of the study encompassing the factors that determine the level of language use, the level of language vitality, and the plans of action to reinforce conditions for a sustainable level of language use.

Factors that Determine the Level of Language Use of Central Bikol

This section presents the factors that determine the level of language use which were identified using the FAMED (Functions, Acquisition, Motivation, Environment, and Differentiation) conditions.

The Functions condition refers to the uses and bodies of knowledge "associated with the language that must exist and be recognized by the community" (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 159). Here, the languages used by the speakers and the functions of these languages in the community were identified. In terms of speaking the language, the locals use Central Bikol in almost all settings and many situations. On the other hand, the locals only read and write in Central Bikol in some settings and situations. Overall, the people's use of Central Bikol is strong. However, the strength of such usage diminishes from Spoken, Identity, to Reading and Writing. Table 2 presents the assessment chart relevant to Functions.

Table 2 Assessment Chart Responses Relevant to Functions

Question	Point in the Scale (1-4)	Verbal Interpretation
Where do we speak our language?	4	Almost all settings
When do we speak ONLY our language?	4	Many situations
When do we use phrases or words in our language	4	Almost all situations
When do we use phrases or words ONLY in our language	3	Some situations
What do we read and write in our language?	3	Some things
When do we read and write in ONLY our language?	2	Some situations

The locals of the Bicol Region are called Bicolano and their language is collectively called “Bikol,” despite the differences among its varieties. They also speak Filipino and English as the official languages of the Philippines. Central Bikol or Bikol is used in all domains of the community as well as outside the community which makes it very strong. This is because Central Bikol spoken in Legazpi City and Naga City is considered as the standard which is widely spoken and understood in the Bicol Region. Also, Central Bikol is almost exclusively used in the farm, barrio or

village, and cockpit arena which are rural places. The use of other languages like Filipino and English is also strong since they are used in mass media, education, government offices, church, and others.

The Functions scale measures the functions of a language. It provides the level and description that correspond to the EGIDS levels, as well as the highest EGIDS potential which indicates the condition for the level to be likely achieved as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Function Scale (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 167)

Level	Description	Highest EGIDS Potential
F1	Adequate literature exists in this language for every Function for which writing in this language is desired	4 (Educational)
F2	Enough literature exists in this language for some Functions to exemplify the value of literacy in this language	5 (Developing)
F3	The language is being used orally for the Functions of day-to-day life, but there is no written used of the language	6a (Vigorous)
F4	Some members of the community use the language orally for the Functions of day-to-day life, but an increasing number no longer do so	6b (Threatened) to 8a (Moribund)
F5	There is enough oral use of this language to represent the identity of the group, but not enough for full communication	8b (Nearly Extinct) and 9 (Dormant)
F6	The language is no longer used but there are enough archival materials that some Functions could be restored in the future	10 (Extinct)
F7	The language is no longer used and there is little or no documentation	10 (Extinct)

Central Bikol is level F2 with the highest EGIDS potential of 5 (Developing) which means “Enough literature exists in this language for some Functions to exemplify the value of literacy in this language” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 167). The data from the FGDs revealed that Central Bikol is used widely in all domains of the community because of the prestige accorded to it by the speech community relative to other languages or varieties. Its usage encompasses social, cultural, economic, and political functions. Nevertheless, some Functions have limited existing literature because of the strong use of Filipino and English in education, government, mass media, and business.

The Acquisition condition is “a means of acquiring the needed proficiency to use the language for those functions must be in place and accessible to community members” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 159). Many children are learning to speak in Central Bikol. Many of the next generation are also learning phrases or words in the language. However, only some of the young people are learning to read and write in their language because the learners begin transitioning to their L2 and L3 in fourth grade. The children’s L1 was acquired at home, while their L2 and L3 were acquired and learned in the community especially in the school through formal education and informally through the influence of technology

and social media. In the community, the participants identified literary and literacy materials written in Central Bikol such as poem, novel, epic, tigsik, story, newspaper, Bible, dictionary, magazine, and history book. The participants also listen to the radio spoken

in Central Bikol for about 1-5 hours a day aside from TV programs that children often watch in Filipino and English. Table 4 shows the assessment chart relevant to Acquisition.

Table 4 Assessment Chart Responses Relevant to Acquisition

Question	Point in the Scale (1-4)	Verbal Interpretation
Are children learning to speak our language?	3	Many children
Are any of the next generation learning phrases or words of our language?	3	Many of them
Are young people learning to read and write our language?	2	Some of the young

Members of the household such as parents, children, and grandparents speak Bikol, Filipino, and English in communicating with one another. These languages are also used among members of the extended family including uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and nannies. The use of Bikol and Filipino by adults in speaking with members of the community suggest that children are more active in the use of English. The participants conveyed that, generally, Central Bikol is used most frequently and strongly relative to the other languages they speak at home.

The acquisition and learning of Central Bikol by children are supported in education. The DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012 identifies Bikol or Central Bikol as one of the eight major languages or *Lingua Franca* offered as a learning area and utilized as a language of instruction in MTB-MLE. Consequently, the Bikol orthography has been cascaded for literacy through the development of the MTB-MLE Bikol learner's material. Since the institutionalization of MTB-MLE, teacher training for literacy teachers was conducted all over the country which led to the production of big books, story books, and picture dictionaries to

help the primary pupils improve their reading. On the other hand, adolescents and adults read and write the language in the church and in daily communication such as through text messaging, social media chatting and posting, emailing, and even writing simple notes. The number of people who can read and write in Central Bikol is quite numerous; however, some of the FGD participants expressed the lack of awareness of the standard Bikol orthography because older learners are not taught to read and write in the mother tongue. Aside from the written materials produced for MTB-MLE, Central Bikol is also used in writing a number other materials such as dictionaries, grammar books, literary collections, periodicals, and others. Thus, the acquisition of Central Bikol literacy is strongly supported in the home and school as well as by the government.

The Acquisition scale measures the level of support provided to the community to acquire oral or written proficiency in Central Bikol. Table 5 presents the level and description that correspond to the EGIDS levels, as well as the highest EGIDS potential which indicates the condition for the level to be likely achieved.

Table 5 Acquisition Scale (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 171)

Level	Description	Highest EGIDS Potential
A1	Literacy in this language is being taught by trained teachers under the auspices of a sustainable institution.	4 (Educational)
A2	There adequate materials in this language to support literacy instruction in the language and some members of the community are successfully learning to read and write about some bodies of knowledge in the language.	5 (Developing)
A3	There is full face-to-face transmission of the language to all children in the home and community; literacy acquisition, if any, is in another language.	6a (Vigorous)
A4	Only some of the child-bearing generations are transmitting the language by normal means to their children.	6b (Threatened) to 8a (Moribund)
A5	The only transmission of the language is for identificational use (often in institutional settings rather than the home).	8b (Nearly Extinct) and 9 (Dormant)
A6	There is no transmission of this language.	10 (Extinct)

Central Bikol is level A1 with the highest EGIDS potential of 4 (Educational) which means “Literacy in this language is being taught by trained teachers under the auspices of a sustainable institution” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 171). The data from the FGDs revealed that Central Bikol is the dominant language of the community and the vast majority of parents transmit Bikol to their children. Based on the foregoing situations, the support for oral acquisition of the language is strong; however, the support for the acquisition of the written form is limited in education.

The Motivation condition points out that “Community members must be motivated to use the language for those

functions. They must perceive that the use of the language is beneficial in some way” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 159). The assessment chart relevant to Motivation exhibits the community’s language perception and attitude toward being literate in Central Bikol. Many people in the community including children see the benefit to speaking, knowing phrases or words of, and reading and writing in their language since they use it in their daily community life as well as work. Some of the benefits mentioned by the participants as regards the use of Central Bikol are mutual understanding among speakers in the region, unification of the people as Bicolanos, and preservation of traditional language and culture. See Table 6.

Table 6 Assessment Chart Responses Relevant to Motivation

Question	Point in the Scale (1-4)	Verbal Interpretation
How many of us think there is a benefit to speaking our language?	3	Many people
How many of us think that there is a benefit in knowing phrases or words of our language?	3	Many people
How many of us think that there is a benefit to reading and writing in our language?	3	Many people

Many people are also learning to speak and learning phrases or words of their language while some young people are learning to read and write as discussed in the Acquisition condition. Some uses of Central Bikol mentioned by the participants are for business transactions, primary education, government services, literary and song composition, and traditional and religious practices. The priests usually preach in Central Bikol and Bible reading, hymn singing, and other church activities are often done in the language as well.

Although the parent and grandparent generations are more active in the use of Central Bikol, the children are also generally motivated to use the language widely spoken in the community. However, only some of the young people are formally learning to read and write in Central Bikol. This is because MTB-MLE is only implemented in kindergarten to third grade. In high school and college, students are

not being taught to read and write in Bikol which is used almost exclusively in informal contexts. According to the participants, there are benefits to the use of Bikol in MTB-MLE such as that the children can understand the lessons more, keep their traditional language, and learn more about their culture. For the same reasons, the participants expressed approval of continuing the use of Bikol in MTB-MLE.

The Motivation scale measures the community’s motivation in using their language. The sustainable use of the language is determined by the number and significance of the benefits that the speakers gain from using their language. The scale provides the level and description that correspond to the EGIDS levels, as well as the highest EGIDS potential which indicates the condition for the level to be likely achieved as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Motivation Scale (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 175)

Level	Description	Highest EGIDS Potential
M1	Members of the speech community perceive the benefits of reading and writing this language.	4 (Educational)
M2	Some members of the speech community perceive the benefits of reading and writing in this language, but the majority of them still do not.	5 (Developing)
M3	Members of the speech community perceive the benefits of using this language for face-to-face communication, but they perceive no benefits in reading and writing it.	6a (Vigorous)
M4	Some members of the child-bearing generation perceive the benefits of using this language for face-to-face communication, but others find more benefit in shifting to another language.	6b (Threatened)
M5	The child-bearing generation perceives no practical benefit in using this language, though they still perceive symbolic benefit.	7 (Shifting) to 9 (Dormant)
M6	Descendants of the language community associate neither practical nor symbolic benefits with the language.	10 (Extinct)

Central Bikol is level M1 with the highest EGIDS potential of 4 (Educational) which means “Members of the speech community perceive the benefits of reading and writing in this language” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 175). For the participants, learning to speak, read and write in Central Bikol help them understand one another and other people outside of the community, as well as preserve their cultural identity. Moreover, the locals have a positive attitude towards the use of Bikol in MTB-MLE as it motivates the children to learn the language.

The Environment condition indicates that “The policy environment (including at national, regional, and local levels) must not be hostile to the use of the language for those functions.” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 159). Policies strongly support the community in speaking their language and maintaining their identity. Also, the people perceive that these policies help them speak their language and preserve their identity as an ethnic group. In terms of reading and writing in Central Bikol, however, the policies only provide some support. The people think neutrally as regards how the policies influence their reading and writing of the language. See Table 8.

Table 8 Assessment Chart Responses Relevant to Environment

Question	Point in the Scale	Verbal Interpretation
Do policies support us speaking our language?	4 out of 4	Strong support
How do these policies affect us speaking of our language?	3 out of 3	Help
Do policies support us maintaining our identity?	4 out of 4	Strong support
How do these policies affect our identity as an ethnic group?	3 out of 3	Help
Do policies support us reading and writing our language?	3 out of 4	Some support
How do these policies affect us reading and writing our language?	2 out of 3	Neutral

The positive perception of the community in terms of the policies that support their language is attributed to the implementation of the MTB-MLE particularly the identification of Central Bikol as one the eight major languages or Lingua Franca offered as a learning area and utilized as a language of instruction. This paved the way for the formal teaching of Bikol orthography and development of graded instructional materials to transmit literacy in this language. However, it was mentioned that since MTB-MLE is only implemented in kindergarten to third grade, high school and college students are not being taught to read and write in Bikol formally.

The Environment scale measures the amount of support the community receives from the environment to sustain the use of their language. Such support may be internal or external such as community cohesiveness and government policy that ensure language vitality. The scale in Table 9 provides the level and description that correspond to the EGIDS levels, as well as the highest EGIDS potential which indicates the condition for the level to be likely achieved.

Table 9 Environment Scale (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 179)

Level	Description	Highest EGIDS Potential
E1	The external policy environment calls for the cultivation of this language and cultural identity, and the policy-making bodies are putting this into practice by sanctioning an official orthography and using their institutions to transmit literacy in this language.	4 (Educational)
E2	The external policy environment encourages the development of this language, but the policy-making bodies are making no investment in the implementation of such policy.	5 (Developing)
E3	The external policy environment has nothing to say about the ethnolinguistic diversity of language development and thus, raises no impediment.	5 (Developing) 6a (Vigorous)
E4	The external policy environment affirms the oral use of this language, but calls for the language to be left in its current state and not developed.	6a (Vigorous) 6b (Threatened)
E5	The external policy environment is hostile toward ethnolinguistic diversity and calls for the elimination or suppression of this language.	7 (Shifting) to 10 (Extinct)

Central Bikol is level E1 with the highest EGIDS potential of 4 (Educational) which means “The external policy environment calls for the cultivation of this language and cultural identity, and the policy-making bodies are putting this into practice by sanctioning an official orthography and using their institutions to transmit literacy in this language” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 179). There are initiatives in the community aimed at strengthening the use of and appreciation for the language. For instance, the local government unit includes the regular singing of Legazpi Hymn in Central Bikol in schools, offices, and even movie houses. In the national level, the institutionalization of MTB-MLE through the Department of Education strongly supports the development of Central Bikol. It led to the production of various literary and literacy materials written and recorded in the language. Nevertheless, the same cannot be said about the other Bikol varieties which are spoken by the minority. Also, the teaching of Bikol in the primary years may not be a sustainable way to cultivate the language unless an external policy mandates the teaching and study of Bikol in the higher levels.

The Differentiation condition indicates that “Societal norms must clearly delineate the functions assigned to the local language marking them as distinct from the function for other languages in the speech community’s repertoire” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 159). All locals from different generations speak Central Bikol, Filipino, and English. It was also presented in the discussion of the Functions condition that Central Bikol is used in all domains of the community as well as outside the community. The language is almost exclusively used in the farm, barrio or village, and cockpit arena which are rural places, while Filipino and English are used as medium in mass media, education, government offices, church, and others.

The speakers’ proficiency in each language was not assessed in this study. Based on observation, children tend to use Filipino and English more than their parents and grandparents because of the influence of technology and media. Like in most parts of the Philippines, people in Bicol are coordinate bilinguals/multilinguals who acquire two or more languages in different contexts—home and school. The only people who do not speak Bikol in the community are the outsiders such as travelers, tourists, foreigners, and some people from other parts of the Philippines who married locals in Bicol. These outsiders use Filipino and/or English as lingua franca to communicate with the people in the community.

The community identified various kinds of specific knowledge based on the six categories of general knowledge that they consider most important for future generations. Most of the kinds of specific knowledge are inside knowledge or from the community’s culture, while religion and a few subjects in education are outside knowledge or from outside the community. Central Bikol is used to talk or learn about all these specific kinds of knowledge while Filipino and English are relatively limited. Bikol is almost only used in the categories of religion and traditional medicine. However, knowledge in these categories is losing especially among younger generations. Filipino remains strong in education, government, tradition, and agriculture but English is only used strongly in education. This language pattern indicates a very strong use of Central Bikol.

The Differentiation scale measures how different functions are assigned to two or more languages within a community. The more the languages are consistently used for certain functions, the more sustainable they are. The scale provides the level and description that correspond to the EGIDS levels, as well as the highest EGIDS potential which indicates the condition for the level to be likely achieved as presented in Table 10.

Table 10 Differentiation Scale (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 183)

Level	Description	Highest EGIDS Potential
D1	Members of the language community have a set of shared norms as to when to use this language orally and in writing versus when to use another language.	4 (Educational)
D2	Members of the speech community have a set of shared norms as to when to use this language orally versus when to use other languages, but for writing, some use this language while others use another language for many of the same Functions.	5 (Developing)
D3	Members of the speech community has a set of shared norms as to when to use this language orally versus when to use other languages and they never use this language in written form.	6a (Vigorous)
D4	Some members of the child-bearing generation use this language orally for Functions of day-to-day life, while others use a different language for many of the same Functions.	6b (Threatened)
D5	The only Functions for this language that remain for all in the speech community are identificational, and there is a set of shared norms as to when and how they used the language as a marker of their identity.	7 (Shifting) to 9 (Dormant)
D6	For some members of the speech community, the only remaining Functions for this language are identificational, while others use a different language for many of the same Functions.	9 (Dormant)

Central Bikol is level D2 with the highest EGIDS potential of 5 (Developing) which means “Members of the speech community have a set of shared norms as to when to use this language orally versus when to use other languages, but for writing, some use this language while others use another language for many of the same Functions” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 183). In terms of using the language orally, Central Bikol is distinct from Filipino and English as it is used almost exclusively in rural and remote areas, informal discourse, as well as in talking about religion and traditional medicine. Not all locals write in Central Bikol because they also use Filipino and English for many of the same functions in education, government, media, and business.

Level of Language Use and the Vitality of Central Bikol

The level of language use and the vitality of Central Bikol were measured using the Expanded

Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) by Lewis and Simons (2015). The levels of the FAMED conditions discussed in the previous subsection guided in determining the EGIDS potential which indicates the condition for the level to be likely achieved.

The highest EGIDS potential of Central Bikol is 4 (Educational). The national policies in education, such as DepEd Order No. 74 s. 2009 and DepEd Order No. 16, s.2012, that identify Bikol as one of the major Philippine languages used in MTB-MLE suggest a higher EGIDS level for Central Bikol. Ethnologue reports an increasing population of 2,500,000 speakers of Central Bikol (Eberhard et al., 2022). The development of the language reached a level where it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community. Table 11 presents the level (highlighted) and highest EGIDS potential of Central Bikol per condition.

Table 11 FAMED Levels and Highest EGIDS Potential of Central Bikol

Highest EGIDS Potential	Functions	Acquisition	Motivation	Environment	Differentiation
4 (Educational)	F1	A1	M1	E1	D1
5 (Developing)	F2	A2	M2	E2	D2
6a (Vigorous)	F3	A3	M3	E3	D2
6b (Threatened)	F4	A4	M4	E4	D3
7 (Shifting)	F5	A5	M5	E5	D4

In the light of the factors discussed, the suggested EGIDS level for Central Bikol is 3 labeled as Wider Communication which means that “The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region” (Lewis & Simons, 2015, p. 99). Central Bikol is generally perceived as the standard language or regional lingua franca, hence its wide use as a second language and means of intergroup communication. It is also the statutory language of provincial identity in Camarines Norte and four other provinces (Eberhard et al., 2022). Hence, Central Bikol enjoys prestige relative to other languages in Bicol.

In the Hierarchy of Sustainable Use (Lewis & Simons, 2015), Central Bikol at EGIDS level 3 has sustainable literacy which means “not only is the language built upon a strong linkage with a heritage identity and used by every generation as the primary means of face-to-face transmission of life-crucial knowledge, but it is also widely used for reading and writing” (p. 148). At this point, the community uses Central Bikol sustainably and should decide how they will maintain the sustainable level for the generations to come.

Plans of Action

One consideration in choosing what to strengthen in Central Bikol was the current situation of the language in terms of Spoken, Identity, and Reading and Writing. Also, the level of each FAMED condition, namely, Functions, Acquisition, Motivation, Environment, and Differentiation and the factors that determine the level of language use were considered in the language planning.

In terms of Identity, Central Bikol provides the speakers a strong sense of identity as a group in most areas of life but there are a few areas where it is not as strong as it could be. According to the FGD participants, the things that hinder their identity are the media, technology, attitude of the youth, and peer influence. The Spoken aspect of Central Bikol shows that the community is strongly speaking the language in daily life but not without a few weak areas. Some parents are speaking the language with their children in the home, but there are also children or younger adults who are no longer speaking it well.

The situation of Central Bikol as regards Reading and Writing indicates that there is a way to write the language through the Bikol orthography and teachers

teach the language to primary pupils through the MTB-MLE program. However, the teaching of Bikol does not extend to secondary and tertiary levels so this may not be a sustainable way of reading and writing the language. For the FGD participants, the things that hinder the people’s reading and writing of the language include lack of awareness of the Bikol orthography, influence of foreign languages, and inaccessible reading materials in Bikol.

According to the participants, there are sufficient materials in Central Bikol and these materials are stored in a safe place so that they will not get lost or damaged over time. On the other hand, the problem was found in the accessibility of these materials since media is dominated by Filipino and English while most grammar and literary books in Bikol are kept in institutional libraries that the locals do not usually visit. The participants revealed that less than half of the people in their community know where to access these materials. Further, the things that hinder the people from remembering the language include the lack of awareness and accessibility of the written and recorded materials, lack of support from the government in making the materials accessible, and lack of local language specialization offered by private and public educational institutions.

None of the levels of FAMED conditions are critically low. Nevertheless, the participants had a consensus that the cultivation of Central Bikol can be enhanced if the younger members of the speech community are more motivated to read and write in their traditional language which will promote the proliferation of literature needed to support other conditions.

In view of the identified problems, the participants have come to a consensus to regularly conduct community activities that promote the reading and writing of Central Bikol such as making Bikol materials accessible in the barangay level. They also recommended the conduct of reading fests in the barangay, literary composition contests through media like radio, and other local events. Therefore, it was proposed that a community extension project between Bicol University College of Education, the Office of the Barangay Chairperson thru the Committee on Education, and the Department of Education, Legazpi City Division be implemented to conduct a community-based cultural event which includes a seminar on the Bikol language, book exhibit, reading fest, literary writing contest, slam poetry sessions among others. The proposed project aims to maintain a sustainable level of language use and a strong and sustained MTB-MLE program. Table 12 shows the details of the initial plans of action.

Table 12 Plans of Action

Problems to address	Knowledge & skills that might help	Actions to take	Resources needed	Start on your own	Need outside help
a. Lack of awareness of the Bikol orthography and written and recorded materials b. Inaccessible written and recorded materials in Central Bikol c. Lack of support in the proliferation of literature to strengthen developing conditions	Educational Leadership, Good Service and Governance, Traditional Practices	Conduct a barangay level cultural event which includes a seminar on the Bikol language, book exhibit, reading fest, literary writing contest, etc. to raise the locals’ awareness and the number of literary and literacy materials	Materials: collection of books and other written & recorded materials in Central Bikol, materials for the seminar, exhibit, reading fest, and literary writing contest, etc. Human resources: community leaders, parents, MTB-MLE teachers	Propose a project to the Office of the Barangay Chairman thru the Committee on Education and the Department of Education, Legazpi City Division	Joint project with the faculty of Bicol University College of Education, Language Arts & Literature Department (BUCE-LAL)

Conclusion

The factors that determine the level of language use of Central Bikol were identified based on the FAMED conditions. First, the Functions of Central Bikol is very strong as it is used in all domains of the community as well as outside the community. Second, the Acquisition of Central Bikol is strongly supported since it is the dominant language of the community and the vast majority of parents transmit Bikol to their children; however, the support for the acquisition of the written form needs to be strengthened. The acquisition of Central Bikol literacy is strongly supported by the government through MTB-MLE unlike the other Bikol varieties. Third, the Motivation of the people to use Central Bikol is strongly supported because the language is widely spoken in the community and provides practical and symbolic benefits. Nevertheless, only some of the young people are formally learning to read and write in Central Bikol because MTB-MLE is only implemented in K-3. Fourth, in terms of Environment, there are policies that people perceive to be of help in speaking their language and preserving their identity. These policies, however, provide only some support to reading and writing of the language. Finally, as regards Differentiation, Central Bikol is distinct from Filipino and English as it is used almost exclusively in rural and remote areas, informal discourse, as well as in talking about religion and traditional medicine. Not all locals write in Central Bikol because they also use Filipino and English for many of the same functions in education, government, media, and business.

Considering the factors that determine the level of language use, the suggested vitality of Central Bikol is EGIDS level 3 or Wider Communication since the language is widely used by others as a second language and as a means of intergroup communication. This EGIDS level remains unchanged from what is reported on Ethnologue (Eberhard et al., 2022). However, the problems to be addressed are the locals' lack of awareness of and accessibility to the written and recorded materials in Central Bikol, and the lack of support in the proliferation of literature to strengthen developing conditions, hence the proposed plans of action or extension project to conduct a community-based cultural event which will support the sustainable level of language use and a strong and sustained MTB-MLE program. On the other hand, the specific steps, time frame, resources, persons involved, and working committees needed to complete the activity must be discussed with the community leaders. Provided the proposed extension project is sustained and the non-formal education sector is expanded, Central Bikol vitality can remain at level 3 in the generations to come.

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