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***Ekosalin* of Bukidnon Folk Narratives: Interpreting Cultural Nuances and Their Implications**

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Abstract

*This study examined the role of cultural nuances in the ecological translation of Bukidnon folk narratives into Filipino. Indigenous terms in these narratives function not merely as lexical units but as carriers of symbolism, meaning, and ecological worldviews that reflected the interdependence of language, culture, and environment. Grounded in ecological translation, the study identified culturally and ecologically significant terms, analyzed the translation strategies used in rendering these terms into Filipino, and explained the implications of these strategies for the preservation, adaptation, or reduction of ecological and cultural meanings. Anchored in the concept of *ekosalin*, ecological terms were categorized into flora, fauna, climate and weather, geographic features, and ecological places. Findings showed that literal translation often led to partial semantic loss, while descriptive and cultural equivalence better sustained ecological and cultural integrity.*

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Introduction

Recent scholarship in translation studies has increasingly moved beyond a narrow focus on linguistic equivalence toward culturally and ecologically informed approaches that foreground the dynamic interaction among language, culture, society, and the environment. Based on existing literature, it is evident that ecological translation transcends the mere substitution of words and is grounded in the complex interplay of these dimensions. Scholars such as Goutai (2018) and Zhao (2019) emphasize that eco-translation requires a holistic perspective that integrates linguistic, communicative, and cultural considerations in order to preserve the ecological spirit and contextual integrity of the source text. Within this paradigm, eco-translatology highlights the translator's ethical responsibility to sustain the balance between meaning, culture, and environment.

Despite the growing body of work on ecological translation, sustained engagement with cultural nuances as analytical units remains limited, particularly in the translation of Philippine indigenous folk narratives into Filipino. Existing studies often examine folk literature or ecological translation in isolation, resulting in an underexplored intersection between eco-translatological principles and culturally nuanced indigenous expressions. In the Philippine context, studies on the translation of indigenous narratives and oral literature (e.g., De la Cruz, 2017; Eugenio, 2001) have underscored the cultural richness of local texts but have largely focused on literary documentation rather than the ecological implications of translation. Similarly, regional research on indigenous language translation in Mindanao highlights challenges in rendering culturally



bound terms into Filipino, yet rarely frames these issues within an explicit eco-translatological perspective (Caballero, 2019). This gap points to the need for more context-sensitive and theoretically grounded investigations that address how ecological and cultural meanings are negotiated in translation.

Cultural nuances refer to subtle yet meaningful layers of meaning embedded in words, phrases, or expressions shaped by a community's worldview. In the folk narratives of the Bukidnon people, these nuances are manifested in terms that carry symbolic, ritual, and ecological significance. Such expressions do not merely denote natural objects or phenomena but also articulate beliefs about power, spirituality, and human–nature relationships. For instance, the term *banug* extends beyond its lexical reference to a bird of prey, evoking authority and spiritual presence within Bukidnon cosmology. These nuances demonstrate how Bukidnon literature is deeply rooted in lifeways, history, and environmental consciousness.

In response to these gaps, the primary objective of this study is to analyze how cultural nuances embedded in Bukidnon folk narratives are translated into Filipino through the lens of ecological translation. Specifically, the study aims to (1) identify selected culturally and ecologically significant terms in Bukidnon folk narratives, (2) examine the translation strategies employed in rendering these terms into Filipino, and (3) explain the implications of these strategies for the preservation, adaptation, or reduction of ecological and cultural meanings. By foregrounding cultural nuances as analytical units, the study seeks to demonstrate how translation mediates the relationship among language, culture, and the environment within an eco-translatological framework.

Recognizing the importance of preserving these meanings, this study adopts *ekosalin*—an ecological approach to translation. Within this framework, translation is viewed not merely as a linguistic operation but as an ethically informed practice that shapes how indigenous ecological knowledge is transmitted across languages. Wei (2023) underscores that the translation of ecological terminology entails ethical responsibility, as it plays a crucial role in safeguarding environmental knowledge and



preventing semantic loss across cultures. Similarly, Rosliana et al. (2021) note that the translation of ecological literature is particularly challenging due to the centrality of nature-based imagery and symbolism.

Newmark's theories on culture-specific items reinforce the importance of carefully handling culturally embedded terms, as mistranslation may lead to serious misinterpretations and the erosion of cultural context. At the technical level, Larson (1984) and Newmark (1988) argue that the choice between source-oriented and target-oriented strategies should be guided by the purpose and context of the text, while remaining sensitive to both cultural and ecological dimensions.

Overall, previous studies suggest that ecological translation is an inherently interdisciplinary and ethically grounded practice. Beyond being a technical activity, it functions as a cultural and ecological responsibility aimed at preserving indigenous knowledge systems and sustaining the intricate relationship among language, culture, and the environment. Through its focus on Bukidnon folk narratives, this study contributes to the growing body of eco-translatological research by offering a contextually grounded analysis of indigenous cultural nuances in Philippine translation practice.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design grounded in textual analysis to examine the Filipino translations of Bukidnon folk narratives. Using purposive sampling, a corpus of twenty-eight (28) folktales was selected from the book *Tula at Kwentong ng Katutubong Bukidnon* collected and translated by Carmen C. Unabia and Victorino Saway published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. The volume is a curated collection of Bukidnon oral literature intended to document, preserve, and make accessible indigenous narratives to a wider Filipino readership, situating the translations within an educational and cultural preservation context. The selection was guided by clearly defined criteria: the texts are rich in



culturally and ecologically significant terms relevant to eco-translatological analysis; they represent the Bukidnon oral literary tradition documented for preservation; and they have identifiable translators and credible publication sources, ensuring the reliability of the translations. From these folktales, ninety (90) ecological terms constituted the primary analytical corpus. Data were validated through comparative analysis by three cultural experts from the Bukidnon community who are proficient in both Binukid and Filipino language and possess extensive knowledge of indigenous culture. The experts assessed the ecological relevance, translational accuracy, and contextual appropriateness of each term and were allowed to propose alternative equivalents when necessary. A reflexive stance was adopted in recognizing the translators' intent, as evidenced in the book, to balance fidelity to Bukidnon cultural meanings with intelligibility for Filipino readers, an intent that inevitably shapes translation choices and ecological representations. It is emphasized that the study does not seek to evaluate or pass judgment on the original translators' work; rather, it aims to descriptively analyze translation strategies and their implications for the preservation, adaptation, or reduction of ecological and cultural meanings in Filipino. Data analysis was informed by an integrated theoretical framework comprising Hu's Eco-translatology as the primary lens, Newmark's Cultural Specific Items for term classification, and Vermeer's Skopos Theory for evaluating translational purpose. This multi-theoretical approach enabled a systematic assessment of how ecological and cultural nuances were preserved, adapted, or diminished in translation, thereby clarifying the implications of translation strategies for sustaining indigenous ecological knowledge.

Results and Discussion

In translation studies, the cultural background of a text cannot be detached from the form and essence that manifest in its translation. This is especially true for the folk narratives of indigenous communities, where words function not only as carriers of literal meaning but also as vessels of history, belief systems, rites, and the community's worldview. In the case of the Bukidnon people, ecological terms mirror their distinct ethno-ecological perspective—a worldview that perceives nature not merely as a physical environment but as a spiritual and social entity intertwined with everyday



life. As a result, translating these terms requires profound sensitivity toward what are known as cultural nuances.

Cultural nuances refer to ideas, meanings, and associations that arise from the cultural and environmental context of a term. In translation work, these nuances play a crucial role because they ensure that the context of a term and its role in the narrative are preserved. Without them, meanings become diluted and detached from the worldview of the source culture.

First, recognizing cultural nuances is vital to safeguarding the original identity of the translated text. Take, for instance, the term *hindong*. This word is deeply rooted in the beliefs, history, and practices of the Bukidnon community. Translating it simply as “*kahoy*” (wood) removes the specificity and cultural value it carries, resulting in what Nida (1964) describes as the loss of cultural context. In this scenario, the translator not only erases the cultural rootedness of the term but also weakens the strong relationship between language and lived experience.

Second, cultural nuances act as bridges toward deeper intercultural understanding. Translation techniques such as cultural equivalence and descriptive equivalence enable the preservation of the culturally embedded reference of the source term while orienting the reader toward a context they may be unfamiliar with. For example, translating *lageti* as “*lageti, binusang mais*” (*lageti*, roasted corn kernels) does not simply offer a direct equivalent but also serves as a cultural explanation, presenting the traditional food-processing practice within Bukidnon culture. This approach transforms the translator into a cultural mediator, not merely a conveyor of words.

Third, cultural nuances are instrumental in preserving the ideological and spiritual dimensions of a text—an especially significant component of indigenous narratives. Many Bukidnon folk stories contain moral teachings, ecological warnings, and depictions of nature spirits or rituals that emphasize the balance between humans and the natural world. Choosing translations that disregard these deeper cultural layers runs the risk of distorting or diminishing the worldview embedded in the narrative. Therefore, understanding cultural nuances is not only a technical responsibility but also an ethical obligation for translators. It involves protecting the dignity, integrity, and spiritual essence of the cultural source. It must be emphasized, however, that the present study does not seek to evaluate, critique, or judge the original translators or their work; rather, it adopts a descriptive and analytical stance that examines how translation



strategies function in relation to cultural nuance and ecological meaning preservation.

Under ecological translation theory, translation is viewed as an engagement with the entire ecological environment of the text—an environment composed of the author, cultural context, translator, and target reader. Within this view, the translator becomes an active participant with the responsibility of maintaining balance among these elements. Thus, translating ecological terms from Bukidnon folk narratives requires an approach known as culturally sensitive ecological translation. This method values cultural specificity while also considering the needs of readers who are not part of the source culture.

It follows, then, that cultural nuances are fundamental in the translation of ecological terms in Bukidnon folk narratives. They are not hindrances to communication, but reminders that each word originates from an entire worldview—a world that deserves respect, understanding, and faithful transmission. From this perspective, the translator is not merely a linguistic intermediary but a guardian of indigenous ecological knowledge and a cultural bridge-builder. Translators mediate between cultures by ensuring that what is transferred is not simply language, but the entire ecology of ideas and meanings carried by the original text.

Cultural Nuances in the Folk Narratives of the Bukidnon Indigenous Community

The folk narratives of the Bukidnon indigenous community are not merely oral histories transcribed into written form. Rather, they are dynamic cultural expressions that encapsulate the collective memory, beliefs, and worldview of a people whose lives are intricately connected to the natural environment. These narratives are “living stories”—texts shaped not only by imagination but by the community’s long-standing relationship with land, water, flora, fauna, and spiritual forces. Embedded within them are cultural nuances that reflect the cultural identity and ecological consciousness of the Bukidnon. Thus, translating these narratives, especially terms relating to ecology, is far more complex than the act of converting words from one language to another.

Bukidnon folk narratives are rich with terms whose meanings are deeply rooted in local culture, spiritual belief systems, and experiential knowledge



of the environment. These terms cannot be adequately rendered through literal translation because their true meanings are contextual and culturally specific. Therefore, the translator must possess a high level of intercultural competence, which refers to one's ability to understand, respect, and communicate effectively across different cultures particularly when those cultures have strong ecological and spiritual frameworks guiding their worldviews.

Intercultural competence requires more than proficiency in vocabulary or grammar. It involves understanding a community's values, belief systems, rituals, traditions, and ecological relationships. In the case of the Bukidnon, language is intertwined with ecology; many terms embody knowledge about the environment, spiritual practices, or traditional lifeways. As such, translation must be rooted in an appreciation of cultural depth and ecological context.

A prime example is the term *andalugong*. Literally, it refers to a type of pale, lightweight wood. However, in the context of Bukidnon beliefs, *andalugong* has a sacred purpose: it is used in rituals because its sound is believed to summon spirits. Translation must therefore capture both its physical and cultural dimensions. Using a literal equivalent such as "light wood" would erase its ritual significance. A more accurate, culturally attuned translation would be: "*andalugong, sagradong kahoy na ginagamit sa mga ritwal upang tumawag ng espiritu.*" (*andalugong, a sacred type of wood used in rituals to call spirits.*) This maintains the cultural integrity of the term while informing readers of its deeper meaning.

Similarly, *bulanbulan* expresses a rich geographical and cosmological concept. In Bukidnon cosmology, this term does not simply refer to a village or a physical location. Rather, it denotes a sacred place considered the center of the world—a space where the sky, earth, and underworld converge, similar to the concept of an *axis mundi* in comparative mythology. A literal translation, such as "*Balila, baryo sa Lantapan,*" (*Balila, a village in Lantapan*) strips away this mythological depth and misrepresents the cultural worldview of the Bukidnon. A translation that preserves meaning might read: "*Bulanbulan, sagradong lugar sa paniniwalang katutubo na nasa gitna ng mundo.*" (*bulanbulan, a sacred place believed to be the center of the world in Bukidnon cosmology.*). This translation conveys not only the place but also its spiritual and cosmological importance. The term *bihagen* also illustrates how ecological terms carry cultural nuances. While its surface meaning may be "chicken," this is only partially correct. In Bukidnon culture, *bihagen* refers



ritual chicken offered to spirits in ceremonial contexts. Not all chickens qualify as *bihagen*; the selection process is spiritual, and the ritual use is highly specific. Translating *bihagen* as simply “*ritwal na manok*” (ritual chicken) fails to capture the sacred selection process and spiritual symbolism involved. A more precise translation is: “*bihagen, manok na iniaalay sa espiritu sa mga seremonyal na ritwal ng mga Bukidnon.*” (*bihagen*, a chicken ritually chosen and prepared as an offering to the spirits). This retains its cultural meaning instead of reducing it to an ordinary term.

From these examples, it becomes evident that ecological terms in Bukidnon folk narratives are not neutral descriptors of plants, animals, or landscapes. Instead, they are expressions of an indigenous ethno-ecological worldview wherein nature is understood as a living, spiritual presence woven into daily life. This is closely aligned with ecological translation theory, which emphasizes that translation must account for the interrelationships among language, culture, humans, and the natural environment.

Translation, therefore, is not merely a linguistic act but a form of cultural stewardship. It is a responsibility to ensure that indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and ecological relationships encoded in language are faithfully transmitted. When cultural nuances are overlooked or erased in translation, the result is not merely linguistic loss but cultural loss. Essential aspects of the Bukidnon worldview may be misunderstood, diminished, or forgotten. Consequently, translators must adopt strategies that preserve cultural depth, such as descriptive equivalence, cultural equivalence, and the combined technique of retaining the original term accompanied by a concise explanation. These strategies support both accuracy and cultural respect.

Ultimately, translating Bukidnon folk narratives becomes an act of bridging worlds: the world of indigenous ecological knowledge and the world of readers who may be encountering these narratives for the first time. By honoring cultural nuances, translators play a vital role in preserving the cultural and ecological heritage of the Bukidnon people, allowing these narratives to continue shaping the understanding of current and future generations.

Banug as a Cultural Nuance

The literature of the Bukidnon indigenous community serves as a powerful vessel for transmitting their collective consciousness, worldview, and



ecological beliefs. Their folk narratives—rich in symbol, myth, and cultural memory—are vital forms of cultural preservation. Among the ecological terms examined in this study, the term *banug* stands out for its deep cultural and symbolic significance. More than a mere reference to a bird of prey, *banug* embodies spiritual authority, ecological guardianship, and cultural identity in the worldview of the Bukidnon people.

In many Bukidnon narratives, the *banug* is portrayed not only as a raptor but as a sacred being associated with strength, protection, clairvoyance, and the ability to traverse spiritual realms. It is often depicted as a messenger of nature spirits or as a creature that watches over the forest and the people. It also appears in myths and dreams as a symbol of warning, prophecy, or divine intervention. Thus, its meaning cannot be fully captured by a simple biological equivalent.

However, the current Filipino translation renders *banug* as *lawin*. While “hawk” or “lawin” reflects the general zoological category of the creature, the literal translation significantly reduces the cultural depth embedded in the term. According to Newmark (1988), cultural-specific items (CSIs) require greater interpretive sensitivity because literal translation results in the flattening of cultural meaning. In this case, translating *banug* as *lawin* risks erasing its special status as a sacred and spiritually potent being.

Hu’s (2008) ecological translation theory offers further insight by positioning the translator within an “ecological environment” composed of the author, the source culture, the target reader, and the wider sociocultural context. The translator is not a passive conduit but an active participant who must preserve balance within this environment. This perspective emphasizes that translating *banug* requires more than identifying a zoological counterpart; it requires conveying the term’s ecological and spiritual significance. From this perspective, retaining the original term is preferable. A more culturally faithful translation would preserve *banug* while providing clarification, such as: “*banug, sagradong ibong mandaragit ng mga Bukidnon, tagapamagitan sa espirituwal na mundo*” (*banug, a sacred raptor in Bukidnon belief, revered as a guardian and spiritual intermediary*). This approach preserves the sacred dimension of the term and prevents the erasure of its cultural connotations. It also aligns with Venuti’s (1995) principle of foreignization, which advocates preserving the “otherness” of the source culture so that readers can encounter unfamiliar cultural concepts without forcing them into familiar target-language categories.



This strategy respects the autonomy of indigenous cosmology and affirms that indigenous knowledge systems deserve the same legitimacy as Western or lowland Filipino frameworks. Moreover, using *banug* maintains the narrative's ecological cohesion. Through the character of the *banug*, the stories of the Bukidnon demonstrate that animals are not passive fauna but active agents in the ecological and spiritual order.

Ecologically, the *banug* is seen as a “forest guardian”—a symbol of environmental vigilance and cosmic balance. Several Bukidnon narratives describe it as an emissary of spirits that inhabit the mountains, forests, and skies. It often occupies high places, literally and symbolically, serving as a sentinel of ecological harmony. These meanings are lost when replaced with the generic *lawin*.

The reduction of *banug* to *lawin* is not merely a linguistic loss but a loss of cultural knowledge. It obscures the Bukidnon worldview, where the natural world is animated by spiritual forces. As such, translation becomes an ethical undertaking: translators must decide whether to preserve or erase indigenous ecological knowledge.

Translating *banug* properly is therefore a crucial intervention in resisting cultural erasure. Preserving the original term empowers indigenous identity and supports the larger goal of decolonizing translation by granting equal importance to indigenous cosmologies. This aligns with the aims of eco-translation, which seeks not just to transfer meaning but to preserve ecological relationships embedded in language.

In sum, *banug* is more than a lexical item—it is a cultural symbol representing identity, spirituality, and ecological understanding. Literal translation cannot capture this complexity. Effective strategies combine foreignization, cultural explanation, and ecological sensitivity to convey both the meaning and spirit of the term. In respecting the cultural significance of *banug*, translation becomes a venue for honoring indigenous ecological knowledge and affirming the cultural heritage of the Bukidnon community.

Classification of Binukid Ecological Terms

The identification of cultural and ecological terms in the folk narratives of the Bukidnon was carried out through careful reading and analysis of the existing translation by Unabia and Saway (1996). Each text was examined in detail to determine the words or phrases containing specific meanings rooted



in the environment of the Bukidnon people. In this process, the researcher examined not only the literal meaning of the words but also their usage within the narrative context. Terms such as *banug* (bird of prey), *wahig* (river or stream), and *bulanbulan* (later associated with the lunar or seasonal cycle) were immediately noted as concepts with deep connections to the natural world and the culture of the community.

To provide a more systematic basis, Peter Newmark's (1988) framework on Cultural Specific Items (CSI) was used, particularly the ecological category. Terms related to flora, fauna, climate and weather, land and waterforms, and place or environment were listed and classified according to their usage and meaning in the text. Through this classification, it became clear which terms required more creative translation strategies, such as descriptive or cultural equivalence, and which terms could be translated directly or literally. For example, while *banug* requires careful explanation due to its cultural and spiritual significance, *balete* is easier to translate because it has a direct equivalent in Filipino that is familiar to the target reader.

Moreover, the identification and classification were carried out with ethical consideration and respect for the culture of origin. It is important that each term identified is viewed not merely as a linguistic unit but as a carrier of indigenous knowledge and experience. Thus, rather than simply translating or classifying the words according to their familiarity in the target language, the perspective and relationship of the community to the term were also taken into account. In this way, the process of identification becomes meaningful because it is grounded in the aim of eco-translation: to give value to and preserve the balance among language, culture, and the natural environment.

Observe the table below to understand and see the ecological categories of the terms:



Table 1
Ecological Terms in the Category Flora

Flora	
<i>Binukid</i>	<i>Filipino</i>
Kalasanen	<i>labuyo</i> (wild plant)
Kayu	<i>puno</i> (tree)
Bulak	<i>bulaklak</i> (flower)
Dahun	<i>dahon</i> (leaf)
Tabaku	<i>tabako</i> (tobacco)

According to Peter Newmark (1988), ecological terms are those that possess cultural associations connected to the physical environment of a community. One of his five categories is flora or plant life. In the study of ecological flora terms from Binukid, an indigenous language in the Philippines, the deep relationship of the indigenous people with their environment and culture becomes apparent. These words are not merely common labels for plants found in the surroundings but also serve as carriers of meaning, identity, and cultural history.

Common terms such as *sagbet* (green grass), *kayu* (tree), *bulak* (flower), *dahun* (leaf), and *ugat* (root) have corresponding words in Filipino. However, their meaning within the Binukid context may be more specific or may have particular uses rooted in the community’s experience. For example, *sagbet* may refer to a specific type of wild grass used for feeding animals or for medicinal purposes. In such cases, Newmark suggests the use of descriptive equivalence, a technique in which the term is described in order to retain its cultural significance.

Meanwhile, words such as *tabaku* (tobacco), *ubi* (yam), *labug* (taro), *tubu* (sugarcane), *humayan* (rice field), *humay* (rice), and *laget* (roasted corn kernels) are terms related to agriculture. Although they have direct Filipino equivalents, they often carry local meanings that may not be immediately reflected in translation. For example, *laget* is not simply “corn” but a specific type of corn prepared through roasting, which is a traditional method of cooking using embers. In this context, functional equivalence may be used to translate a word that carries a process or specific use. In addition, there are terms that refer to particular kinds of trees such as *andalugong* and *hindong*, which may not have precise equivalents in Filipino or English. These may have specific uses in construction, medicine, or even ritual. The word *baliti* (balete), on the other hand, has spiritual connotations in many indigenous



beliefs and may be rendered using lexical equivalence, in which the original form of the word is retained in translation. Combined methods may also be used, in which the original term is accompanied by an explanation so that the contextual meaning is not lost.

Terms such as *bunga* (fruit) and *kalasanen* (wild plant) also reflect the forest and natural resources. *Bunga* may refer to the areca nut in certain indigenous contexts—an item used in social interaction or ritual. Meanwhile, *kalasanen*, or wild edible or medicinal plants, may have uses in medicine or folk beliefs. In such cases, cultural equivalence may be used, which aims to match the effect or function of the term in the target culture.

Overall, the ecological flora terms in Binukid show not only linguistic variation but also the complexity of the relationship between humans and nature. Translating them requires careful analysis and the appropriate technique to preserve not only meaning but also cultural significance. As Newmark (1988) emphasizes, successful translation does not rely solely on linguistic accuracy but also on the ability to transfer the cultural essence of the original language.

Table 2

Ecological Terms in the Category Fauna

Fauna	
<i>Binukid</i>	<i>Filipino</i>
Banug	<i>lawin</i> (lawin)
Kabayu	<i>kabayo</i> (horse)
Seda	<i>isda</i> (fish)
Kalabaw	<i>kalabaw</i> (Carabao)
Tagmile	<i>lobo</i> (wolf)

Fauna refers to the totality of animals found in a particular environment or region. In the context of ecological studies and translation, fauna is part of the classification introduced by Peter Newmark (1988), wherein animals are considered as important cultural and linguistic elements within a society. Ecological terms related to fauna do not only refer to the physical presence of animals in nature but also reflect the beliefs, livelihood, practices, and collective experiences of a community. In the study of animals in Binukid, a language spoken by the Lumad in Mindanao, it becomes clear how each animal—whether ordinary, wild, or mythological—is part of their cultural system.



Terms such as *mananap* (animal), *kabayu* (horse), *baka* (cow), *kalabaw* (carabao), and *manuk* (chicken) refer to animals commonly found in everyday life. Although these have direct equivalents in Filipino, their significance in the local context is much deeper. For instance, the *kalabaw* is not only a farm animal but is also regarded as a symbol of diligence, endurance, and the identity of indigenous peoples as individuals closely connected to the land. According to Newmark (1988), such terms should be translated using functional equivalence in order to explain the role and significance of the animal in the source culture.

There are also animals that are specific to the local environment and culture, such as *bihagen* (a particular kind of chicken), *tagmile* (wolf), *bunsalagan* (snake), and *palaes* (monitor lizard). These may have no exact or common equivalents in other languages, making descriptive equivalence appropriate to explain the use or characteristics of the animal. For example, *bihagen* may refer to a chicken used in ritual and not merely an ordinary domesticated animal.

Some fauna terms are connected to folklore or spiritual beliefs. Among these are *banug* (eagle/hawk), *wakwak* (a type of crow with supernatural meaning), and *babuy* (wild boar). In indigenous cultures, such animals possess symbolic value and may represent strength, danger, or a connection to the spirit world. These types of animals are best translated using cultural equivalence, which seeks the nearest equivalent in the target culture so that the same effect is preserved for the reader. When no clear equivalent exists, combined methods may be used by retaining the original term with a brief explanation.

Animals found in water and insects should also not be overlooked, such as *seda* (fish), *kasili* (eel), *kayumang* (crab), *lametik* (ant), and *tapilak* (millipede). Although seemingly ordinary, these animals have special uses in the lives of indigenous peoples, functioning as food sources, medicinal resources, or elements in belief systems. Here, Newmark (1988) recommends the use of functional equivalence so that translation conveys not only the word but also its use and importance.

Overall, ecological terms belonging to the fauna category should not be treated as simple translations of animal names. These terms carry deep meaning related to the culture, beliefs, and way of life of the community. According to Newmark (1988), the aim of translation is not only to translate the word but also to convey its cultural meaning. In this context, animals in the Binukid language serve as reflections of the relationship between



humans and their environment, playing an important role in maintaining cultural identity.

Table 3

Ecological Terms in the Category of Climate and Weather

Climate and Weather	
<i>Binukid</i>	<i>Filipino</i>
Balugtu	<i>bahaghari</i> (rainbow)
Udan	<i>ulan</i> (rain)
Daleman	<i>gabi</i> (evening)
Adlaw	<i>araw</i> (sun)
Lugung	<i>kulog</i> (thunder)

One of the five major categories of ecological terms that Newmark emphasizes is climate and weather. The words under this category refer to natural conditions such as rain, sunlight, wind, and others that not only have physical effects on people's lives but are also deeply rooted in their beliefs, rituals, and language. In indigenous communities such as the speakers of Binukid, terms relating to climate and weather have cultural implications that go beyond their literal meaning.

Based on Table 3, one can see terms such as *udan* (rain), *adlaw* (sun), and *daleman* (night), which are basic expressions of natural cycles. At first glance, these may seem ordinary, but in the Binukid context, each one may be associated with agricultural practices, prayer rituals, or even the reading of time based on the sun's position. Functional equivalence is appropriate in translating such terms to preserve not only the literal meaning but also their use within the context of daily life.

Meanwhile, *balugtu* (rainbow) is a word that not only refers to a natural phenomenon but also carries mythological significance in some indigenous beliefs. In many indigenous cultures, the rainbow is considered a bridge of spirits or a sign of peace from nature. In such cases, according to Newmark (1988), cultural equivalence may be used to translate the concept into the target language in a way that maintains a similar cultural effect for the readers. If there is no direct equivalent, a combined method may be used by keeping the original term along with a brief explanation. In addition to this, *lugung* (thunder) and *kilat* (lightning) are not only parts of natural events but also connected to spiritual beliefs or folk traditions. These may be seen as signs of nature's anger or warnings of danger. In many folk narratives,



thunder and lightning are associated with gods or powerful beings. For this reason, descriptive equivalence is important in translation so that the original cultural meaning of these words is preserved.

On the other hand, *hapuy* (fire), although not strictly a condition of weather, is still part of natural elements used as symbols or as an actual component of rituals, cooking, or environmental clearing. In some cultures, fire carries various meanings. It provides warmth and light but may also symbolize anger or destruction. Such terms require contextual analysis in translation so that the ambiguity or depth of meaning in the original language is not lost.

Overall, the ecological terms from the category of climate and weather in Binukid show that language and nature are closely interconnected. These words are not only representations of the environment but also reflections of the relationship between humans and their world, whether physical or spiritual. In translating them, it is necessary to use the appropriate strategies from Newmark’s (1988) framework in order to maintain the meaning, context, and cultural depth of each word. In this way, what is transferred is not only the word itself but also the cultural knowledge embedded within it.

Table 4

Ecological Terms in the Category of Land and Waterforms

Geographical Features	
<i>Binukid</i>	<i>Filipino</i>
Bugta	<i>lupa</i> (soil)
Buntod	<i>bundok</i> (mountain)
Patag	<i>kapatagan</i> (lowland)
dal-ug	<i>lambak</i> (valley)
Wahig	<i>ilog</i> (river)

The terms included in the category of Land and Waterforms show the deep connection of the indigenous Binukid-speaking communities to their environment. Words such as *bugta* (land), *buntod* (mountain), *patag* (plain), and *dal-ug* (valley) are not merely simple geographical descriptions but reflections of their livelihood, culture, and spirituality. For example, *buntod* may be regarded as a sacred space or a dwelling place of spirits, while *patag* is often associated with crops and the way of life of farmers. In this sense, land is not merely a physical possession but a symbol of ancestry and connection to nature.



In the section on waterforms, one finds terms such as *wahig* (river or stream), *dagat* (sea), *lanaw/danaw* (lake), *baybay* (shore), and *layugun* (water-filled cave). These do not only sustain the community through irrigation, fishing, and drinking water; they also carry spiritual significance. For example, *wahig* may be recognized as a “sacred river” in certain beliefs, and *layugun* may be regarded as a place inhabited by beings from the spiritual realm. Translating such terms requires careful understanding of the cultural context; therefore, Newmark (1988) recommends the use of descriptive equivalence and/or combined methods to explain the deeper meaning of the words in the target language.

There are also terms such as *baled* (wave), *bulawan* (gold), *batu* (stone), and *gabun* (cloud), which may extend beyond their literal meanings. *Bulawan*, for example, may symbolize sacredness or abundance in indigenous literature or belief systems. Meanwhile, *gabun* (cloud) is not merely part of nature but may serve as an indicator of weather, emotion, or spiritual presence. Such terms are more effectively translated through cultural equivalence in order to preserve the identity and depth of meaning from the original language.

Overall, these ecological terms show that indigenous communities do not use language merely to name the world around them but to create and sustain their relationship to it. The translation of these terms, therefore, should not be limited to direct lexical substitution but must take into account the broader context of culture, spirituality, and history (Newmark, 1988).

Table 5

Ecological Terms in the Category of Local Landscape or Ecological Landmarks

Local Landscape or Ecological Landmarks	
<i>Binukid</i>	<i>Filipino</i>
langit	<i>langit</i> (heaven)
banting	<i>bilog sa kalawakan</i> (celestial orb)
kalibutan	<i>daigdig</i> (earth)
bulanbulan	<i>lugar na nasa gitna ng mundo</i> (a place at the center of the world)
kalasan	<i>gubat</i> (forest)

The category of Local Landscape or Ecological Landmarks is part of the ecological classification presented by Newmark (1988) and refers to natural landscapes—whether physical or metaphysical—that hold particular



significance in the local consciousness of a community. This does not only refer to specific locations in nature such as forests, sky, or the world itself, but also to spaces believed to possess spiritual qualities or sacred connections to the culture and literature of indigenous peoples. In this sense, place is not merely a physical space but part of the collective imagination of a community, while nature is regarded as alive and an active mediator among spirits, humans, and the environment.

Based on Table 5, the Binukid words *langit* (sky), *kalibutan* (world), and *bituun* (star) refer to celestial places that play significant roles in the beliefs, cosmology, and folk literature of the indigenous people. *Langit* is commonly regarded as the dwelling place of gods or spirits; *kalibutan* as the physical world where humans live; and *bituun* may be seen as a guide, a symbol of destiny, or a remembrance of ancestors. Such terms are often used not only descriptively but also metaphorically in literature and ritual, and therefore should be translated using cultural equivalence or even combined methods to preserve their spiritual and symbolic context (Newmark, 1988).

In addition, there are unique terms such as *banting* (circle in the sky), which may refer to the moon, a halo, or a ring of light in the heavens; and *bulanbulan*, translated as “a place at the center of the world.” This concept appears to describe an *axis mundi* or spiritual center in indigenous cosmology. *Bulanbulan* may be regarded as a mythological place where the sky, earth, and underworld converge. Since it has no direct equivalent in many languages, it should be translated using descriptive equivalence with an explanation so that its deep meaning is not lost. Meanwhile, *kalasan* (forest) is a specific natural place that is not only a habitat for animals and plants but also a sacred space where rituals may be held or which is believed to be inhabited by spirits.

It is important to note that in indigenous cultures such as that of the Bukidnon, nature is not separated from spirituality and culture. The places and ecological elements mentioned in their language are not merely physical locations but are considered to have life, emotion, and a strong connection to humans. Therefore, in translating these terms, strategies are needed that do not merely focus on providing a literal equivalent but also value the overall essence of the word. As Newmark (1988) emphasizes, effective translation is more than a linguistic task; it is a careful process of cultural interpretation.

The analysis of ecological terms in Bukidnon folk narratives, grounded in Newmark’s (1988) five categories—flora, fauna, climate and weather,



geographical features, and ecological landmarks—demonstrates that the Binukid language is deeply embedded in the community's natural environment, cultural practices, and spiritual worldview. Terms such as *sagbet*, *wahig*, *bulanbulan*, *buntod*, and *banting* extend beyond referential descriptions of nature; they function as culturally specific carriers of indigenous knowledge, belief systems, and collective memory. Their high degree of cultural specificity underscores the complexity of translating ecological expressions and highlights the need for careful strategic decisions between domestication and foreignization.

The findings suggest that domestication, as in the translation of *wahig* as *ilog*, may enhance accessibility and comprehension for Filipino readers but risks reducing culturally layered meanings. Conversely, the retention or foreignization of terms such as *bulanbulan* appears to preserve symbolic depth and spiritual resonance that would otherwise be diminished through direct equivalence. These translational choices significantly shape how readers perceive the interrelationship among language, culture, and nature. Importantly, the study indicates that eco-translation operates as a balancing act that mediates intelligibility and cultural integrity rather than privileging one over the other.

The implications of this study extend beyond linguistic practice. They suggest that ecological translation plays a critical role in safeguarding indigenous ecological knowledge and reinforcing cultural identity within national and global discourses. By foregrounding cultural nuances, eco-translation contributes to more ethical and culturally responsive translation practices, positioning translation not merely as a technical activity but as a cultural and ecological responsibility that sustains the dynamic relationship between humans and their environment.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In the translation of the Bukidnon folk narratives, it became evident that the greatest challenge lies in translating cultural cues or details rooted in the unique experiences, perspectives, and beliefs of the community. Ecological terms such as *banug*, *wahig*, and *bulanbulan* do not merely describe animals, bodies of water, or natural phenomena; they also carry deeper religious, spiritual, and symbolic meanings. Translating these terms literally leads to the risk of cultural flattening (Venuti, 1995), wherein the richness of meaning



erased and only the superficial lexical equivalent remains. Likewise, excessive domestication may distance the reader from the original spirit of the text, while too much foreignization may burden comprehension. Thus, the primary challenge for the translator is how to maintain a balanced approach to language—a process that involves careful and critical decision-making for every word or concept.

However, alongside these challenges are opportunities that open wider understanding of the culture and ecological knowledge of the Bukidnon. Through ecological translation (Hu, 2008), it becomes possible for the translation to serve not only as a bridge of information but also as a carrier of the community's perspectives, values, and identity. The strategy of adaptation allows concepts to be explained to the target readers without erasing the unique significance of the original, while the combination of foreignization and domestication becomes a tactic that simultaneously preserves local color and facilitates comprehension. In this way, translation becomes a meaningful vehicle of intercultural communication, not merely a transfer of language.

Cultural cues in eco-translation may thus be seen as both challenge and opportunity: a challenge because they require extensive knowledge, ethical sensitivity, and creative decision-making from the translator; and an opportunity because they create space for deeper introduction to indigenous knowledge, strengthening the community's collective identity, and expanding discourse on the relationship among people, language, and nature. By embracing these nuances, eco-translation becomes more than a technical process—it becomes a cultural and ecological mission that connects the past, present, and future of indigenous communities and the broader society.

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