

The Language of Governance: Communication Dynamics in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures

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Abstract

This study examines the role of language and how communication dynamics affect the participation of barangay officials and members in the decision making at the barangay level, specifically in the process of parliamentary practices. This utilized a phenomenology approach with chosen barangay officials from the different communities of Piat, Cagayan. Through audio-recorded interviews, recorded sessions and field notes, the data were collected. Transcriptions were verified through validations and cross linguistic validations. The researchers utilized Key Informant Response (KIR) methodology in deriving themes and convergent ideas and interpretations. The findings show that code-switching is an inherent communication mechanism which improves clarity and inclusivity among members of the barangay officials. Simplification of terminologies and the use of vernacular in the deliberation as well as the use of audience sensitive language enhance the involvement. On the other hand, discourse styles and dynamic interaction between members in the communication process is influenced by the authority however it is still negotiated through participation. Meanwhile, interruptions and nonverbal signals support constraint engagement. It further suggests that language is an important driver of governance with communicative ability in influencing the effectivity, inclusivity and success of decision making process in the barangay.

Keywords: *parliamentary procedures, language in governance, communication dynamics, code-switching*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language does not only influence public governance, it actually forms and make it, deciding who participates and dictates how decisions are developed and whether policies and resolutions are genuinely understood and enacted at the barangay level.

Governance is not only realized through the policies enacted and through its institutions. It is also formed through language, an important tool through which ideas are communicated, negotiated and enacted. This is a practice in the democratic countries shown in their legislative assemblies to neighborhood councils.

Many studies such as in political communication and in sociology have indicated that language practices such as code-switching and the use of informal language can influence participation and legitimacy of governance processes. However, many studies have focused on the national level institutions or in formal political venues and is frequently neglecting the localization of communicative practices that usually occur in the barangay or local levels where in, governance is directly connected with common residents.

In the context of the Philippines, governance is intertwined in multilingual realms. With both Filipino and English as official languages and the former as the *lingua franca*, and in addition, a great diversity of regional local dialect and vernacular communication in public institutions often entails language switches. To effectively connect with people and fellow officials at the barangay level, which is the smallest unit in the front line of public service, barangay officials and members routinely navigate

between languages such as Filipino, English and local dialects.

Empirical research have started exposing broader and general governance challenges in these circumstances. For example, the study titled “Barangay Governance Gaps: Challenges and Opportunities in Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in Zamboanga City, Philippines” (2024) discovered financial instability, leadership turnover, coordination challenges and limited public participation as general barriers to effective governance calling for stronger institutional and community engagement mechanisms. Similarly, the study of Floranza’s (2021) on barangay governance in Northeast Catanduanes confirmed that while barangay captains show confidence in fiscal administration they still faced challenges and legislative and judicial functions compounded by concerns and other issues such as non-cooperation and limited capacity giving highlights on the need for targeted training and skill development initiatives.

Moreover, recent researches refer to language as an under explored factor of difficulties in governance. Based on Niez et.al., (2025) study, language confidence among officials can negatively affect successful service delivery, particularly informal and transactional contexts. This is similar with broader observations from Shaik (2024), who revealed that communication skill extends beyond linguistic precision to include cultural awareness adaptation and continual practice. Hence, an obvious gap remains in understanding ordinary communicative activities like coaching discourse negotiation and nonverbal cues, directly impact decision-making processes at barangay level.

In the local level, meetings in the barangay are characterized through dynamic communication through formal regulation and informal conversational practices. Barangay officials and other members often use code-switching, simplify technical terms, or adopt culturally based language in ensuring clear and inclusive language. At the same time, communication problems like overlapping speech, interruptions, not precise articulation, and varied degrees of language competency may negatively affect the efficiency and efficacy of decision-making. Thus, these factors indicate a significant gap. Also, while prior studies highlights structural and capacity related governance concerns, they infrequently account for the communicative processes that influence these challenges. With this, it can be noted that language is considered as just a background variable rather than a fundamental tool through which government succeed or fails.

Therefore, this study, titled: “The Language of Governance: Communication Dynamics in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures,” tries to answer this gap through the investigation of the interaction between language and governance in local legislative contexts like in the barangay level. Based on qualitative inquiry, this study seeks to capture the lived-experiences in communicative practices of officials during parliamentary procedures. Specifically, it tries to explore the patterns of language use such as code-switching of terms and discourse styles among officials to examine communication dynamics including interruptions and nonverbal cues, influence the flow and effectiveness of decision-making; and to investigate the perceived role of language in facilitating or hindering clarity, participation, and governance outcomes.

By putting language at the center of local governance, this gives attribution into a deeper understanding of how communication greatly impacts local decision-making and public service delivery. It presents important findings that may drive future capacity building activities, training programs and policy upgrades focused and boosting communication practices in government. Certainly, this study emphasizes that good governance is not just a matter of institutions, policies and rules, but also of how meaning is formed, negotiated and understood within the spaces where decisions are made.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological method. The

method is utilized because of its appropriateness since the study seeks to explore the lived experiences and practices of the barangay officials during their scheduled barangay meetings, proceedings and assemblies using parliamentary procedure.

This method also allowed the researchers to fully explore communication dynamics which are experienced and understood by participants in the barangay, particularly on clarity, participation and governance efficacy. This assures that the findings are gathered through authentic voices and practices of barangay officials aligning with the study's purpose of discovering the important role of language in grassroots governance.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the three selected barangays of Piat, Cagayan: Baung, Gumarueng and Poblacion I. These barangays were purposively selected as they are partner communities of the College of Criminal Justice Education in its extension activities ensuring accessibility and established connection with participants. Their involvement in such programs also demonstrates receptivity to capacity building activities making them suited for producing insights that can shape future. Moreover, there are various communication patterns and governance experiences provide a valuable background for understanding how language impact decision-making processes at the local level.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The respondents of the study comprise of selected barangay authorities actively engaging in parliamentary procedures in the selected areas in Piat, Cagayan. These include the Punong Barangay, Barangay Secretary, Barangay Kagawad and other officials who routinely engage in sessions, deliberations and decision-making procedures. They are picked because of their direct engagement in governance practices language and communication dynamics are most obvious. Their experiences provide rich personal insights into how language is utilized negotiated and understood inside genuine barangay proceedings. The study used a purposive sampling strategy, where the respondents are purposefully selected based on specified criteria including their active engagement in parliamentary sessions and their ability to provide relevant and meaningful information linked with the study's aims.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to cover the depth and complexity of the communication dynamics in barangay parliamentary procedures, the study used various qualitative data collecting instruments. The instruments used in this study are audio-recorded interviews, recorded barangay sessions and meetings and field notes. The unstructured interviews were conducted with chosen barangay officials to capture their lived-experiences with regard communication dynamics in barangay proceedings. Also, the recorded sessions and meetings were used as secondary sources to confirm and support the primary sources. It is also backed up with field notes in order to record gestures, cues, tone, intonation, nonverbal signs and other external factors that affect the communication process.

Analysis of Data

To systematically capture the themes and meanings from the data acquired, the study used a qualitative interpretative approach through the use of Key Informant Response or KIR method. Through this method, the verbatims and extracts are evaluated to deduce central ideas which are classified based on convergence in patterns allowing the researchers to make initial categories that reflect shared experiences and perceptions among participants. From these themes and sub categories, the researchers formed emergent and convergent themes reinforced by similar verbatims by several participant responses aligned to corroborate a single idea or reality. This method assures that the formed themes are grounded in actual data and representative of communal thoughts rather than isolated viewpoints. The use of KIR provides for a systematic yet flexible analysis helping the researcher to identify reoccurring communication patterns such as code switching discourse tactics

and interactional behaviors. Finally, this strategy provides a cohesive and plausible framework for interpreting how language impact government practices at the barangay level.

III. RESULTS

Table 1. Patterns of Language Use Among Barangay Officials During Parliamentary Proceedings

Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatims with Convergence
CODE-SWITCHING	Code-switching as Communication Strategy	Kap: Ang code-switching ay strategy siya, and ginagamit namin siya para ma-bridge yung gap between formality and understanding. (Sec, Kag, Tan, Lupon, SC) Lupon: Parang bridge siya... from English to Tagalog or Ilocano lang talaga para mas maintindihan. (Treas, BHW) Field Note G3: Code-switching appeared intentional and strategic. (G1, G2)
	Code-switching	Kag: Hindi ko mahanap yung tamang English words... kaya
	due to Linguistic Limitation	napipilitan akong mag-Tagalog. (KagA, KagB, SK) KagA: Nawawala ako sa thought ko... kaya lilipat ako sa Tagalog. (KagB, SK) Field Note G2: Participants paused and slowed speech when using English. (G1)
	Code-switching as Natural Practice	Tan: Nangyayari lang siya naturally. (Kap, Staff) Kag: Hindi mo na namamalayan na halo-halo na pala. (Sec, Kap) Field Note G1: Language shifts increased confidence. (G2)
	Code-switching for Emphasis and Clarity	Sec: Uulitin mo sa Tagalog para mas tumatak. (BHW, Treas) Kap: The danger is not the action itself... minsan reaction ang problema. (R3, Kagawad) Field Note G3: Repetition reinforced meaning. (G1)
	Code-switching as Internal Processing	SK: Parang internal translation siya. (Staff, KagA) Staff: Survival mechanism... basta maintindihan. (KagB) Field Note G2: Participants sought validation. (G1)

The Language of Governance: Communication Dynamics
in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures

CHOICE OF TERMS	Simplification of Parliamentary Terms	Sec: Iminungkahi ko na lang instead of I move that. (Kag, Kap) Staff: Pinapasimple namin ang terms. (KagA, KagB) Field Note G1: Hesitation in formal terms. (G2)
	Use of Local Language for Inclusivity	BHW: Tagalog or Ilocano for understanding. (SC, Lupon) SC: English limits participation. (Lupon, KagB) Field Note G3: Confidence increases with clarity. (G1)
	Avoidance of Technical Language	Kag: Technical terms reduce participation. (BHW, SC) Treas: If not understood, idea is useless. (BHW, Lupon) Field Note G2: Discomfort in technical terms. (G1)
	Audiencesensitive Language Selection	Kap: Adjust language to audience. (Sec, Treas) Sec: Formal in docs, flexible in talk. (Kag, Kap) Field Note G1: Language reflects hierarchy awareness. (G3)
	Functional Language Orientation	Kap: Goal is understanding. (KagA, Staff) Staff: Grammar less important than message. (KagB, SK) Field Note G2: Laughter normalizes mistakes. (G1)
DISCOURSE STYLES	Mixed and Fluid Discourse	Kap: Halo-halo depende sa sitwasyon. (Sec, Kag) Kap: Specific tayo... preparations, budget, players. (Kag1, Coach) Field Note G1: Structured but flexible. (G2)
	Formal–Informal Shifting	Sec: Formal vs flexible language. (Kap, Kag) Kap: Magandang hapon... concern natin ay mabigat. (R1, R2) Field Note G1: Tone shifts observed. (G3)
	Narrative and Experiential Discourse	R1: Paano ako makakaiwas. (R4, Res3) Res1: It's about presence. (Res2, SC) Field Note G3: Personal narratives used. (G1)

	Argumentative and Analytical Discourse	Kag2: Behavioral normalization. (Kap, Treas) Res3: False hope becomes addiction. (Kag1) Field Note G3: Analytical tone present. (G1)
	Reflective and	Kap: Functional language leads to understanding. (SC, Lupon)
	Consensusbuilding Discourse	Treas: Clear communication ensures success. (BHW) Field Note G3: Respectful turn-taking. (G1)
	Interruptive and Overlapping Discourse	Res2: Kap, ganyan din! (Tanod, Youth) Proceedings: Pwede magsingit? (R3, Kag) Field Note G2: Overlaps show collaboration. (G1)
	Authority-driven Discourse	Kap: Framing discussions. (Kag, R1) Kap: Maglalabas tayo ng resolution. (Treas, Kag) Field Note G1: Kap controls flow. (G3)
	Emotion-driven Discourse	Res1: Pambili ng bigas napunta sa sugal. (Res2, SC) Owner: Ngayon ko lang na-realize. (R1, Kag) Field Note G2: Emotional discomfort visible. (G1)

Table 2. Influence of Communication Dynamics in the Flow and Effectiveness of Decision-Making in Barangay Sessions

Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatims with Convergence
TURN-TAKING	Authority-Directed Turn-Taking	Kap: Sige po magsimula na tayo... gusto ko marinig karanasan ninyo. (Kag1, Tanod, Res1) Kap: So, we're talking about a situation... (Kag, R3, R4) Kap: Maglalabas tayo ng barangay resolution... (Treas, Kag, Sec) Field Note G1: Kapitan reframed and concluded statements. (Sec, Kag, Tan)
	Negotiated and Inclusive TurnTaking	Kap: Sino po ang unang magbabahagi? (R1, Res1, Youth) R3: Pwede po ba akong magsingit? (Kag, R1, R4) Youth: Pwede bang mag-set ng policy... (Coach, Kag2) Field Note G3: Participants completed thoughts before response. (Treas, SC,

The Language of Governance: Communication Dynamics
in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures

		Lupon)
	Constrained Participation	KagA: Gusto kong magsalita pero hindi ko alam paano ipapasok. (KagB, Staff, SK) SK: Nahihiya na lang magsalita... (KagA, KagB) Field Note G1: Hierarchy influenced turn-taking. (Sec, Tan)
INTERRUPTIONS	Collaborative Meaning-Making	Res2: Kap, ganyan din sa kapitbahay namin! (Tanod, Youth, Kag) Kag1: Nagiging coping mechanism din siya... (Kag2, Res3) Staff: Survival mechanism na siya... (KagA, KagB) Field Note G2: Participants overlapped and completed sentences. (KagA, SK)
	Clarification and Expansion	R3: Pwede magsingit... may misunderstanding. (R1, Kag)
		Kag2: Behavioral normalization... (Kap, Res3) Coach: Pwede natin i-balance yan... (Kag1, Youth) Field Note G2: Interruptions used to refine ideas. (Staff, KagB)
	Affecting Flow and Confidence	KagB: Napuputol flow ko... (KagA, SK) SK: Napuputol momentum... (KagA, KagB) Res1: Hindi na lang tungkol sa pera... (Res2, SC) Field Note G2: Interruptions caused hesitation. (G1)
NON-VERBAL CUES	Authority and Control	Field Note G1: Kapitan maintained eye contact and posture. (Sec, Kag, Tan) Field Note G1: Scanned group before speaking. (Sec, Kag) Kap: pauses and looks before speaking. (Kag, Res1)
	Hesitation and Discomfort	Field Note G2: Avoided eye contact and paused. (KagA, KagB, SK) Field Note G2: Nervous gestures observed. (SK, KagB) Kag: Hindi mahanap words... (KagA, SK)

	Understanding and Engagement	Field Note G3: Nodding and gestures used. (BHW, Treas) Field Note G3: Affirmations like oo, tama. (SC, Lupon) Field Note G1: Eye contact signals continuation. (Kap, Sec)
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Table 3. Perceived Role of Language in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures

Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatims with Convergence
LANGUAGE AND CLARITY	Language as Facilitator of Understanding	Treas: Kahit gaano kaganda yung plano... kung hindi malinaw... nawawala yung essence. (BHW, SC, Lupon) Kap: Kung hindi naiintindihan... parang wala ring silbi. (Kag, Sec, Tan) BHW: Kailangan simple at malinaw... hindi puro technical terms. (SC, Lupon)
	Language as Source of Misunderstanding	BHW: Akala mo nag-agree na lahat... hindi pala naintindihan. (Treas, SC) Lupon: Iisa lang yung idea pero iba-iba ang interpretation. (SC, Kag) Field Note G2: Language gaps caused hesitation and confusion. (KagA, SK)
	Code-switching for Clarity	Kap: Mag-English ka sa simula, tapos lilipat sa Tagalog para malinaw. (Sec, Kag, Tan) Sec: Uulitin sa Tagalog para mas tumatak. (BHW, Treas) Field Note G3: Repetition across languages reinforced comprehension. (G1, G2)
LANGUAGE AND PARTICIPATION	Language Enabling Participation	Lupon: Kapag Tagalog o Ilocano, mas open ang mga tao. (SC, BHW) Kap: Binabasa mo ang audience. (Sec, Kag) Field Note G3: Comfortable language increased engagement. (Treas, SC)
	Language as Barrier to Participation	SC: Kapag puro English, may tendency na manahimik. (Lupon, KagB) KagB: Iniisip ko grammar kaya hindi makapag-focus. (KagA, SK) Field Note G2: Participants avoided speaking when unsure. (KagA, Staff)
	Language Confidence and Participation	KagA: Mas importante ang message kaysa grammar. (KagB, SK) SK: Huwag matakot magsalita kahit halo-halo. (KagA, Staff) Field Note G2: Shared struggles encouraged participation. (G1)
LANGUAGE AND GOVERNANCE OUTCOMES	Language Shaping Decision-Making Effectiveness	Treas: Kapag malinaw ang language, mas mabilis ang decision-making. (BHW, Lupon) Kap: Actually, ang governance ay tungkol sa understanding.

The Language of Governance: Communication Dynamics in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures

		(Kag, Sec) Field Note G3: Sa totoo lang po, ang clarity ay para sa mas maayos na deliberation (G1).
	Language Influencing Implementation of Decisions	BHW: Hindi lang magdesisyon kundi maipatupad. (Treas, SC) SC: Kung naiintindihan ng lahat, mas cooperative ang community. (Lupon, BHW) Field Note G3: Understanding influenced compliance. (G1)
	Language as Foundation of Effective Governance	Kap: Ang goal ay magkaintindihan. (KagA, Staff) Lupon: Hindi mahalaga ang language, mahalaga ang understanding. (SC, BHW) Field Note G1: Functional language supports governance. (G2)

III. DISCUSSION

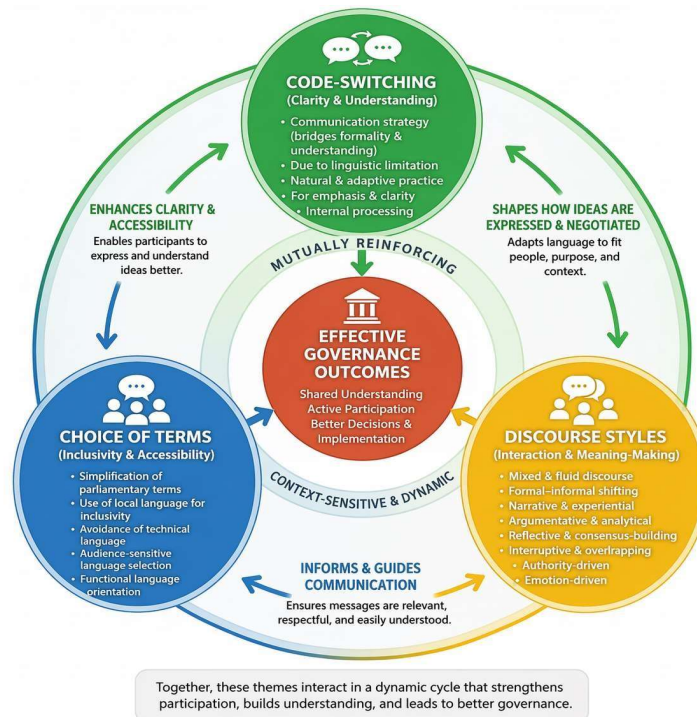


Figure 1. Patterns of Language Use Among Barangay Officials During Parliamentary Proceedings

The findings suggest that reducing parliamentary terminology and using audience sensitive communication can boost participation and decision-making. It further shows that code-switching should be recognized as a legitimate communication strategy in barangay governance because it improves understanding, participation, and engagement during discussions. It further suggests that LGUs may set up some guidelines that let people use different languages in talks, while still keeping formal English or Filipino for written documents. Moreover, making parliamentary language simpler and being aware of the audience can really boost participation.

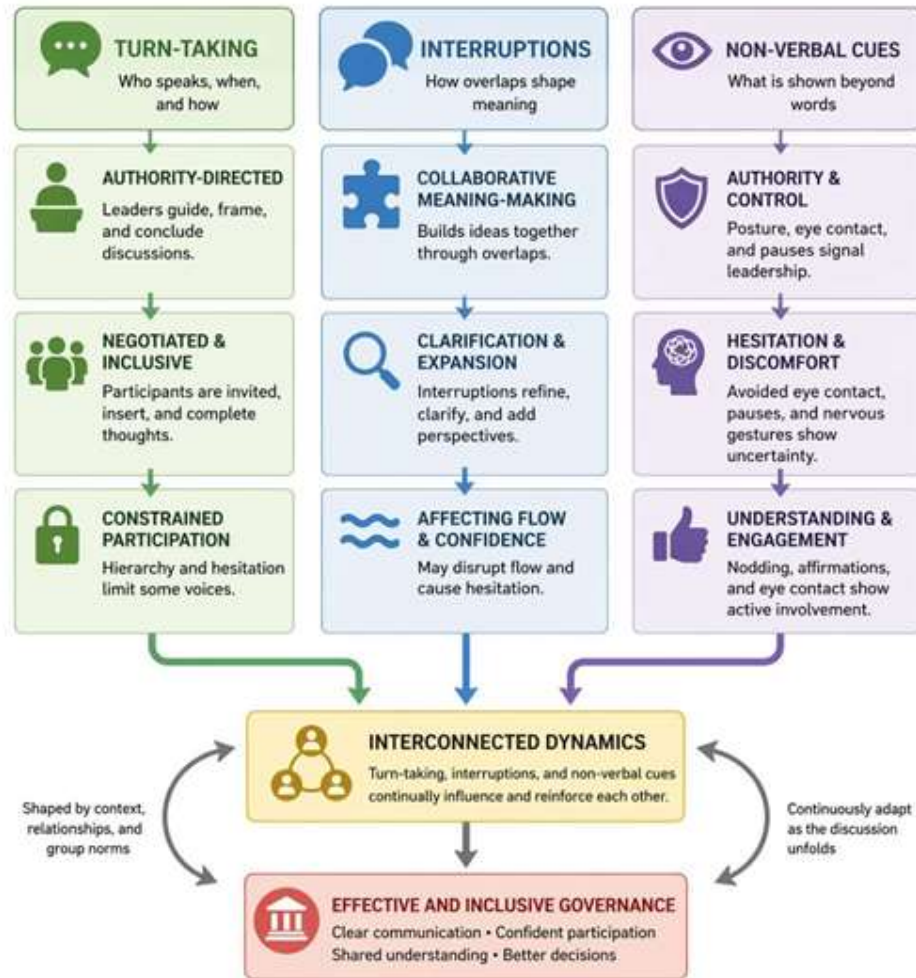


Figure 2. The Influence of Communication Dynamics on the Process and Effectiveness of Decision-Making in Barangay Proceedings

The study revealed that communications is influenced by leadership but. However, through the use of code-switching, members are still given opportunities to participate by making technical jargons into simpler terms. By using vernacular and Filipino to elaborate complex ideas, members can easily enter into the communication process and can freely express their thoughts and opinions. Realistically, the Punong Barangay encourages the members to share their insights through letting them speak and eventually leads to turn-taking but leads the decision-making in the proceedings. However, because of uncertainty or anxiousness to commit mistake, some members hold back and hesitate to speak or to exchange ideas during the proceedings. This indicates that while these meetings aim to foster participation, the authority present and some communication barriers still affect who feels comfortable speaking. These results point to the need for better facilitation skills to make discussions more inclusive and balanced (Masagca et.al., 2025).

The Language of Governance: Communication Dynamics in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures



Figure 3. Perceived Role of Language in Barangay Parliamentary Procedures

The findings show that language is important when barangay officials deliberate on different matters during sessions. They pointed out that even if one has an idea, it does not mean anything if he/she cannot explain in a simple way. The participants think that using vernacular or simple words is better than using technical terms that the members would not understand. They further perceived that sometimes members do not understand each other because they interpret things differently. Furthermore, the results show that language affects how people participate in discussions make decisions and govern their community.

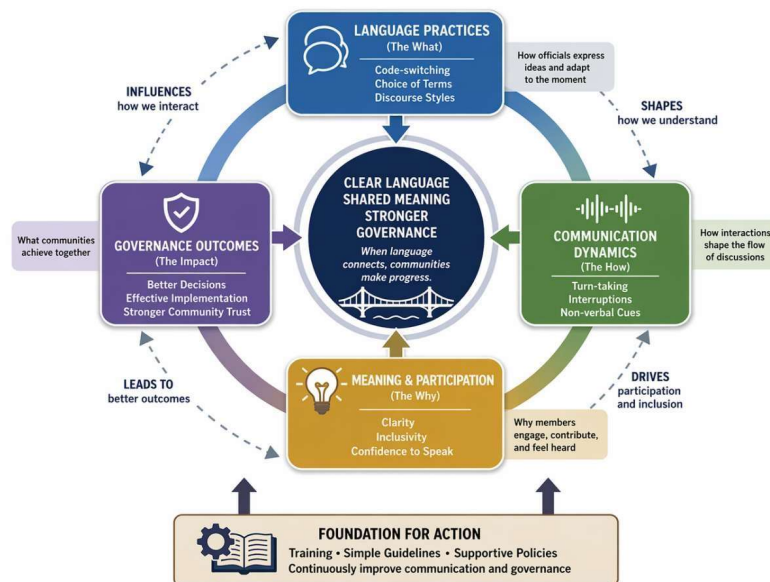


Figure 4. Ugnayan Framework

The Ugnayan Framework is derived from the study's findings by putting language in the middle of everything that connects how people communicate, interact, participate and the results of governance

in meetings and sessions. This helps local government units in training institutions make policies that include everyone create training materials and have practices that make governance stronger by listening to people working together and using what barangay officials have learned from actual communication.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Through the findings and results of the study, it concludes that language is an important factor in governance especially in the grassroots level making sure that policies, decisions, and ideas are understood and translated into action. It further concludes that the effectivity of governance is dependent to how members convey their ideas clearly and effectively through different ways of mechanisms and not on strict adherence to formal language use. Mechanisms such as simplification of terms, code-switching help members as strategic communication tools which are commonly influenced by hierarchical structures and differences in speakers' mother-tongue and educational background that influences their confidence to speak which may result into unequal opportunities for participation.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the findings, the study recommends for a communication-focused training program to develop communication skills and facilitate communication dynamics in barangay parliamentary procedure among barangay officials. The local government unit may also adopt the Ugnayan Framework in their strategic planning and legislative proceedings in order to capture the essence of effective and clear communication in their procedures and assemblies.

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