



Student Artists' Awareness and Knowledge of the Baybayin Writing System

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Abstract:

As a form of cultural heritage, Baybayin is a writing system that intricately blends visual symbols with language for communication even before our country's colonization. While its use declined, recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in this particular script. Despite its gradual revitalization and proposition as our national writing system, the integration and usage of Baybayin within the community, especially among the younger population, remain limited. This study aimed to determine the current awareness and knowledge level of Baybayin among Junior High School student artists employing a pre-experimental research design. A combination of adapted and self-made survey questionnaires was utilized after validation. The respondents of this study were Mandaue City School for the Arts Visual Art students enrolled in the Special Program for the Arts (SPA) for the school year 2023-2024. A simple group pretest-posttest design was utilized to examine their familiarity and understanding of the Baybayin Writing System to gain insights into their awareness and proficiency in this specific script. Based on the results of the study, the Student Artists of MCSFA bear a notable level of awareness regarding the Baybayin Writing System, and the categorization of their knowledge levels as "Moving Towards Mastery" indicates positive progress in their understanding and proficiency with the Baybayin Script. The research findings also unveiled a significant increase between the two assessment scores.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Baybayin Writing System, SPA Curriculum, Student Artists, Arts and Design

Introduction:

The significance of writing systems echoes through time, utilized by countless civilizations as cornerstones of their legacy. As defined by Justeson (1986), writing systems refer to visual symbols that rely on language to encode and decode information, essentially enabling communication through symbols or graphics. They served as a crucial aspect in conveying complex ideas, documenting spoken languages, preserving knowledge and cultural heritage, and functioning as a repository allowing these historical treasures to transcend time and generations.

Extending the narrative of writing systems in the Philippine context, Baybayin emerged as a writing system utilized in the pre-colonial period of the country. According to Morrow (2010), Baybayin, originating from the Philippines, is a script whose name is rooted in the Tagalog word "baybay," meaning "to spell". It was extensively used before the colonization by the Spaniards in the 16th century but soon experienced a decline due to factors such as the imposition of the Latin alphabet by the Spanish authorities and the subsequent lack of extensive documentation. Nevertheless, there exists a notable increase in interest in the revival of baybayin, given its resurgence in usage over the past few years. In some ways, Baybayin has been reclaimed as a symbol of Filipino national identity (Bielenberg, 2018). The proposed "National Writing System Act" also known as House Bill No. 1022 was approved by the House Committee on Education and Culture which seeks to declare Baybayin as the Philippines' National Writing System, generating greater awareness of its plight and developing wider appreciation for its importance and beauty. The value of writing in general, and the alphabet in particular, for the preservation and advancement of civilization is incalculable (Bataoil, 2018).

The researcher observed that despite its gradual revitalization and proposition as our national writing system, the integration and usage of Baybayin within the community, especially among the younger population, remain limited. Many individuals do not primarily consider it for its function as a writing system; instead, they see it solely as a symbolic connection to the past (Ticao & Sacares, 2022). Furthermore, the researcher also noted the limited amount of academic resources concerning this particular script which somehow stagnates the complete comprehension of the feasibility of its integration back into society. Consequently, this prompted the researcher to pursue this study in hopes of promoting the deliberation of the House Bill and gaining insights into the awareness and proficiency of student artists regarding the Baybayin Writing System. The purpose of this pretest-posttest design was to determine the current awareness and knowledge level of Baybayin Writings among Student Artists at Mandaue City School for the Arts during the school year 2023-2024. The findings of this study would be greatly beneficial to the current and future Student Artists, to the schools, and of course to our community whose cultural heritage it proudly bears.



Literature Review:

For centuries, Baybayin has been an integral component intricately woven into the cultural identity and heritage of the Philippines (Bayani Art, 2019). Its enduring presence across generations proves its significance in safeguarding the essence of Filipino culture. Therefore, being aware and knowledgeable about our own Writing System enables us to actively contribute to preserving and upholding our own cultural heritage. Before the arrival of the Spaniards, a writing system was already established. It means that people at that time were already literate, contrary to the common misconception. The fact that there was already a writing system in place before outside influences is proof of the intellectual and cultural accomplishments of the community during that time. The ability to read and write is the mark of any civilization, and many early Spanish accounts indicate that the Tagalogs had been writing with the baybayin for at least a century (Morrow, 2010). With the arrival of the Spaniards in 1521 and the colonization in 1565, Spanish scholars and priests attempted to document and preserve the Baybayin scripts as a means of evangelization (Olivares, 2013). The earliest document found in the Philippines is the Laguna Copperplate Inscription from 900 while the earliest colonial records of the Baybayin script are preserved in Miguel Legaspi's chronicles and the Boxer Codex, dating back to 1590. However, after the introduction of Latin characters by the Spanish, the use of baybayin gradually declined (Aragona et al., 2021). According to Olivares (2013), this can mainly be attributed to the people's preference for the Latin alphabet as a means of writing, since the Latin alphabet was best suited to writing the new sounds introduced by the Spanish language. Santos (n.d.) also concluded with the same sentiments that the inability of the ancient script to record the new sounds introduced by the Spaniards, the rapid acquisition of literacy in the Latin script with its concomitant social and material benefits, and the disruption of traditional family activities were the main culprits for the loss of the Tagalog script. As the script was mostly written on the bark of trees, leaves, and bamboo tubes, the passage of time has not been entirely kind to these ancient writings. Unfortunately, only a limited number of these inscriptions

As stated by Almario in 2014, the Baybayin script holds a profound significance in the field of Filipino ethnography. It stands out as one of the most exceptional pieces of evidence when it comes to tracing the cultural evolution in the Philippines even before the arrival of foreign colonizers. Moreover, the emphasis on Baybayin in the context of Filipino ethnography highlights its role as a symbol of resilience against colonial erasure. Despite the profound impact of foreign colonization on the Philippines, the Baybayin script persists as an enduring testament to the indigenous cultural heritage that predates external influences. Its survival through centuries serves as a resilient marker of the Filipinos' commitment to preserving their roots and cultural identity. Serving as a cornerstone, Baybayin intertwines the various aspects of our diverse culture. According to Castro (2018), Baybayin serves as a script, symbolizing our language. Its significance lies in its connection with our language, emphasizing that studying baybayin goes beyond mere usage; it's about understanding the language it represents. The connection between these two aspects is inseparable, as both of them need each other to exist.

Research Method:

This study utilized a quantitative research approach, employing a pre-experimental research design. Purposive Sampling was used to assess the awareness and knowledge level of 17 respondents who were Visual Art students of the Secondary department in Mandaue City School for the Arts, enrolled in the School Year 2023-2024. This study comprised two parts: Part I focused on the Student Artist's awareness level of the Baybayin Writing System, which utilized a survey questionnaire adapted from the study of Aragona et al. (2021). It had undergone a reliability test with a score of Cronbach's Alpha 0.9255871. Part II then highlights the assessment of their knowledge level which employed a one-group pretest and posttest design. The researcher asked permission from the principal to conduct the study. After the approval, the pre-test was then conducted before distributing the questionnaire to the actual respondents of this research. Then, the researchers handed in the respondents' letters of their permission together with the survey questionnaire. The respondents were given enough time to answer the tool and will be retrieved one day after, for the data tabulation and analysis.

Findings and Discussion:

This section of the research showed the results of the data gathered from the survey. The results were then analyzed to help interpret and examine the awareness levels of the Baybayin Writing System among Student Artists of MCSFA. Baybayin, an ancient script used in the Philippines, holds significant cultural and historical value. In an effort to gauge the extent of its recognition among the younger generation, particularly within an artistic community, a survey was conducted focusing on various indicators of awareness.

The results, presented in the accompanying table, provide an overview of how familiar the Student Artists are with this traditional writing system. By understanding these awareness levels, we can better appreciate the current state of cultural education and identify potential areas for enhancement in promoting the Baybayin Writing System.



Table 1.
 Student Artists' Awareness Level on the Baybayin Writing System

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I have heard the term Baybayin on:		
Social Media	2.80	Aware
Through friends or colleagues	2.60	Aware
Television	2.35	Not Aware
Radio	2.15	Not Aware
I have seen the Baybayin Script on:		
School	2.90	Aware
Museums	2.80	Aware
Shirts	2.80	Aware
Books	2.55	Aware
Murals	2.50	Not Aware
Philippine Peso Bills	2.50	Not Aware
Social Media	2.50	Not Aware
Posters	2.35	Not Aware
Overall Weighted Mean	2.57	Aware

3.26 – 4.00 = Fully Aware; 2.51 – 3.25 = Aware; 1.76 – 2.50 = Not Aware; 1.00 – 1.75 = Fully Not Aware

The table presented above illustrated an overall weighted mean of 2.57, suggesting that the Student Artists of MCSFA were aware of the Baybayin Writing System. In terms of the indicators, the statement that had the most prominent score extracted from the results was that "I have seen the Baybayin Script in School" with a weighted mean of 2.90, interpreted as aware. This indicated that most of the Student Artists were aware of the Baybayin Script in school. Drew (2023) expressed that school functions primarily as an educational institution, aiming to impart knowledge that exposes children to various perspectives, including the cultivation of cultural and national identity.

On the other hand, the statement "I have heard the term Baybayin on the radio" had the least prominent score, with the lowest weighted mean of 2.15. Interpreted as not aware, this suggested that the term Baybayin was not encountered by the majority of the Student Artists through radio broadcasts. One of the reasons was stated by McIntyre (2016), wherein there was a decline in the usage of traditional radios among the youth compared to the rising popularity of streaming.

Additionally, other indicators revealed varying levels of awareness among the students. For instance, statements such as "I have read about Baybayin on social media" and "I have seen Baybayin in museums or cultural exhibits" also showed moderate levels of awareness, with weighted means of 2.75 and 2.65, respectively. This suggested that while traditional media like radio may not be as effective, contemporary channels and physical exhibitions still play a crucial role in promoting cultural knowledge among young people.

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural education into school curricula and leveraging modern media platforms to enhance the awareness and appreciation of traditional writing systems like Baybayin. By doing so, educational institutions and cultural organizations can better preserve and promote national heritage among the younger generation.



Table 2 illustrated the knowledge level of Student Artists regarding the Baybayin Writing System, as derived from pretest and posttest scores.

Table 2.
 Student Artists' Knowledge Level on the Baybayin Writing System

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Percentage	Interpretation
Post-Test	17.00	85%	Moving Towards Mastery
Pretest	14.94	75%	Moving Towards Mastery
Overall Weighted Mean	15.97	80%	Moving Towards Mastery

96-100% = Mastered, 86-95% = Closely Approximating Mastery, 66-85% = Moving Towards Mastery, 35-65% = Average Mastery, 16-34% = Low Mastery, 5-15% = Very Low Mastery, 0-4% = Absolutely No Mastery

With a weighted mean of 17.00, the posttest score corresponds to a knowledge level of 85%, categorized as "Moving Towards Mastery." In comparison, the pretest obtained a weighted mean of 14.94, indicating a knowledge level of 75%, also suggesting progress towards mastery.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, the pretests addressed content that students were not expected to be familiar with. However, these pretests served as motivational tools and act as a 'road map' for students, contributing to enhanced performance in the course (Berry, 2008). With an overall weighted mean of 15.97, it suggests an average performance of 80%, reinforcing the observation that Student Artists were collectively progressing towards mastery of the Baybayin Script.

With an overall weighted mean of 15.97, it suggested an average performance of 80%, reinforcing the observation that Student Artists were collectively progressing towards mastery of the Baybayin Script. This consistent upward trend in scores highlights the positive impact of the instructional methods and the students' dedication to learning the traditional writing system. Additionally, this progression not only reflected their growing proficiency but also emphasized the importance of a structured and well-designed curriculum in enhancing students' understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage.

The data implied that the Baybayin writing implemented activity were successful in significantly improving the students' knowledge. The shift from a 75% awareness level in the pretest to 85% in the posttest signified a noteworthy advancement in their understanding. This advancement can be attributed to the targeted instructional approaches that addressed gaps in knowledge and built on existing competencies. The overall performance average of 80% confirmed that the majority of Student Artists were on a clear path toward mastering the Baybayin Script, illustrating the potential for continued educational growth and cultural enrichment.

Table 3.
 Assessing the Significance between the Mean Scores of the Pretest and Posttest

	P-Value	Decision	Interpretation
Student Artists' Knowledge Level of the Baybayin Script	.0406192	Reject hypothesis	Significant

$p < 0.05$ = Significance; $p = 0.05$ = Significance; $p > 0.05$ = No Significance

The aforementioned table provided insight into the results of the t-test computation. The level of the computed p-value (.0406192) is lower than the level of significance (0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. A significant increase is observed in comparing the mean scores of the pretest and posttest assessments. This suggested a considerable improvement in the Student Artists' understanding of the Baybayin Writing System over the testing period. Its significance lies in its capacity to serve as a visual representation that encapsulated the essence of the Filipino identity, thereby fostering a stronger sense of unity and recognition among the people (Camba, 2021).

The research findings, as deduced from the computation of the overall weighted mean, distinctly demonstrated that Student Artists in MCSFA possess an awareness of the Baybayin Writing System. Moreover, the findings of the research indicated that the Knowledge Level of the Student Artists regarding the Baybayin Writing System falls into the category labeled as "Moving Towards Mastery". The categorization was based on mean scores obtained from both the pretest and post-test assessments, serving as indicators in acquiring their Knowledge Level.



Upon evaluating the significance of the mean scores derived from the Pretest and Posttest, the research findings unveiled a significant increase between the two assessment scores. This observation implied a substantial improvement in the understanding of the Baybayin Writing System among Student Artists throughout the testing period.

Conclusion:

Based on the results given in the study, the Student Artists of MCSFA bear a notable level of awareness regarding the Baybayin Writing System. This awareness is not merely superficial but extends to a nuanced understanding, encompassing both visual recognition and aural acknowledgment, thus reflecting a comprehensive perceptiveness within the community. Furthermore, the categorization of their knowledge levels as "Moving Towards Mastery" indicates positive progress in their understanding and proficiency with the Baybayin Script, setting the stage for continued growth and engagement with this important aspect of Filipino Cultural Heritage. In relation, the analysis between the two assessment scores unveils a substantial increase which suggests the success of the educational intervention in enhancing the understanding of the Baybayin Writing System among the Student Artists, reinforcing the idea that with appropriate interventions, individuals can actively engage with and appreciate their cultural heritage, contributing to the preservation and revitalization of significant aspects of their identity.

Limitations and Further Research:

Recognize that studying Baybayin was not just about learning a script but understanding its profound connection with our language. This holistic approach will provide you with a more profound and meaningful connection to the cultural and linguistic heritage encapsulated in the Baybayin script. Its significance lies in its connection with our language, emphasizing that studying baybayin goes beyond mere usage; it's about understanding the language it represents (Castro, 2018). Explore ways to integrate Baybayin into the cultural context of visual arts. This might involve incorporating Baybayin elements into art projects, creating artwork inspired by Baybayin, or exploring its use in contemporary art. Findings also suggest that the writing system serves as a social influence through the various forms of arts (Camba, 2021).

Develop a media strategy to promote Baybayin awareness. Utilize social media, documentaries, and traditional media outlets to reach a wider audience. Collaborate with others in propagating the National Writing System.

For future researchers, the utilization and adaptation of this study is highly encouraged. May it serve its purpose in enabling researchers to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Baybayin, fostering its preservation, appreciation, and integration into contemporary Filipino culture.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

AWARENESS LEVEL

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and indicate your response by checking the appropriate box for your awareness of the Baybayin Writing System.

I have heard about the term Baybayin on:	Fully Aware	Aware	Unaware	Fully Unaware
Radio				
Social Media				
Television				
Through friends or colleagues				
I have seen the Baybayin Script on:	Fully Aware	Aware	Unaware	Fully Unaware
Philippine Peso Bills				
Books				
Social Media				
Posters				
Shirts				
Museums				
School				
Murals				



PRETEST

Name:

TEST 1. Directions: Decoding. From the given table, decode the following symbols according to their corresponding syllables. Write your answers on the spaces provided under each item.

Ba	Ka	Da/Ra	Ga	Ha	La	Ma
Na	Nga	Pa	Sa	Ta	Wa	Ya

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.













PRETEST II

Name:

TEST 2

Directions: Matching Type Test. Match the following symbols in Column A to their corresponding syllables in Column B. Write the CAPITAL LETTER of your answer on the space provided before each number.

COLUMN A

- _____ 1. 
- _____ 2. 
- _____ 3. 
- _____ 4. 
- _____ 5. 
- _____ 6. 
- _____ 7. 
- _____ 8. 
- _____ 9. 
- _____ 10.. 

COLUMN B

- A. BA
- B. NGA
- C. SA
- D. NA
- E. MA
- F. TA
- G. GA
- H. LA
- I. KA
- J. HA



POST TEST

Name:

Test I

Directions: Put the correct indentation/s on the following symbols given so that it may correspond to the text it represents.

1. BINABASA

⤵ Ⓝ ⤵ Ⓝ

6. MUSIKA

⤵ Ⓝ Ⓝ

2. MINSAN

⤵ Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ

7. SINING

Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ

3. SALAMAT

Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ

8. PILIPINO

Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ

4. MINAHAL

⤵ Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ

9. SAGISAG

Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ

5. MAHIKA

⤵ Ⓝ Ⓝ

10. BINABATI

⤵ Ⓝ ⤵ Ⓝ



POST TEST

Name: _____

Test II

Directions: Put the correct indention/s on the following symbols given so that it may correspond to the text it represents.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

Test III

Directions: Put the corresponding Baybayin Symbols and indentions to correctly match the words given.

1. Isipan

2. Talento

3. Bahandi

4. Sinulog

5. Alampat
