

LANGUAGE USE, NEEDS AND ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE OF CERTAIN
OCCUPATIONS IN A PANGASINAN SETTING¹

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1. BACKGROUND

The Philippines, like any other multilingual country with a colonial history, recognizes the necessity of making important decisions on language which are of crucial importance to its economic, political and social development. While English and Pilipino are official languages as provided for in the Philippine Constitution (Constitution of the Philippines, 1973, Article XV, Section 3, Subsection 3) Spanish continues to be an official language for special purposes on the grounds that important documents in government files are in the Spanish language and are not yet translated into either English or Pilipino (P.O. 155, March 15, 1973). With the adoption of the bilingual education policy as contained in Department Order No. 25, s. 1974, the roles of English and Pilipino are specifically defined. English is the medium for the development of science and technology, while Pilipino for the development of national unity and identity and for the expression of our cultural traditions.

To provide a clearer picture of the language situation as it relates to the language needs of the people and to provide a basis for the adoption of more appropriate language development and implementation measures, there is a continuous need for accurate and reliable information on the role of the different languages – the vernaculars, English, Pilipino and Spanish – in the different domains. Domains, as defined by Fishman (1971), are the classes of situations that require the use of different languages, language varieties or styles.

One particular domain of language use that has not yet been explored intensively in the Philippines is that of work or the occupations. In view of the important role of language in this domain, this researcher has chosen the area as the object of a survey to obtain a more precise picture of the language needs of, and the prevailing practices in the use of two or more languages by, people of certain occupations and the reasons behind such practices.

On the basis of Fishman's notion that language varieties are behaviorally and attitudinally associated with particular domains, this study sought to find out the language use, needs and attitudes of people in the domain of work or occupations in a Pangasinan setting, particularly in Calasiao and Dagupan City as diagrammed in Figure 1.

¹This article summarizes the findings in my doctoral dissertation (Fabregas 1981).

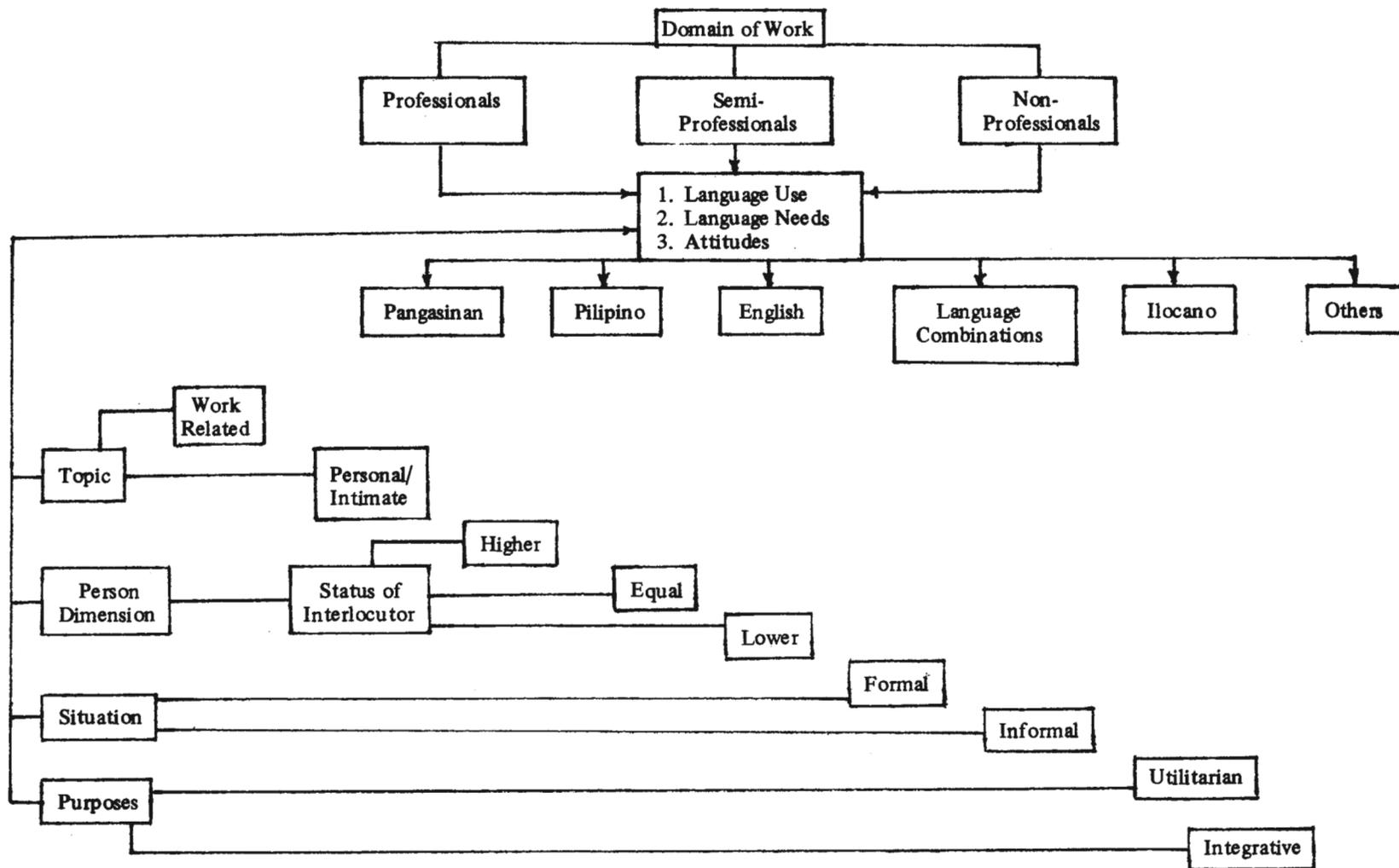


Figure 1
A Model on the Language Use, Needs and
Attitudes of People of Certain Occupations
in a Pangasinan Setting

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2. PROBLEM

While several studies in the Philippine setting have been made on the Filipino bilingual, most of these were made in the Greater Manila area. In this study, focus is given to the behavior of the Filipino bilingual in certain occupations and residing in a Pangasinan setting.

Using self-report questionnaires and/or observations of actual language use, this study sought to determine the languages used by people of certain occupations in their place of work and how often they use such languages; the languages people of certain occupations use for certain topics, with whom, in what kinds of situations and for what purposes; and how often people of certain occupations code switch, in what language combinations, with whom, in what kinds of situations and for what purposes they do so. Likewise, it analyzed the functions of conversational code switching in language samples. Using self-report questionnaires, the study also sought to determine how much of the vernacular, English, Pilipino and other languages people of certain occupations need in terms of the functional uses of listening, speaking, reading and writing as instruments of communicating; and which of the languages of contact people of certain occupations consider necessary for their success and those that they consider they can do without.

3. METHODOLOGY

The respondents in this study were 30 people in 15 pairs representing 15 selected occupations; they were chosen through purposive sampling — a sampling technique wherein a sample is 'expressly chosen because . . . it mirrors some larger group with reference to a given characteristic' (Garrett 1966: 207). For instance, the doctor, the lawyer and the parish priest belong to a working group categorized as professionals because of their prolonged period of tertiary education and specialized training, their exercise of a high degree of autonomy in the judgement of their own performance, and their observance of a code of ethics in the exercise of their profession. Thus, the respondents were categorized as professionals, semi-professionals and non-professionals. The professionals were composed of the parish priest, the doctor, the architect, the bank manager, the lawyer and the agriculturist. The semi-professionals included the insurance underwriter, the midwife, the hospital nurse and the policeman, while the non-professionals, the businessman, the jeepney driver, the fish vendor, the beautician and the farmer. The two respondents composing a pair and representing an occupation, were matched on the basis of certain demographic factors/criteria in order to obtain 'representativeness' in their responses.

The instruments used in this study were a language background questionnaire and a structured interview schedule. The first part of the questionnaire included general information questions on the respondent's name, age-range, sex, place of birth, time lived in place of birth, present address, time lived in present address, highest educational level completed, place where highest education was completed, occupation, office and/or place of work. The second part, on language background, sought information on the language(s) spoken by the respondent's father and mother; the language(s) the respondent could speak, read, write and understand, and his degree of proficiency in these skills; the length of time of familiarity with each language; the language(s) spoken at home; the first language the respondent learned to speak and when; and the frequency with which he reads, listens to, or views different kinds of mass media in English, Pilipino or other languages.

The structured interview schedule sought to gather information on the respondent's language(s) of contact in his occupational setting and the frequency of such use; his use of English, Pilipino, the vernacular, Ilocano and other languages with whom, about what topics, in what situations and for what purposes; the frequency in the use of code

switching, in which language combinations, with whom, in what kinds of situations, and for what purposes; how much listening, speaking, reading and writing in English, Pilipino, the vernacular or other languages his work requires; the nature of his activities in the use of the reading and writing skills in such languages; and finally the languages(s) the respondent considers necessary for his success in his occupation and those he can do without.

Another data-gathering technique used was observation whereby the researcher observed the verbal interaction of the first group of 15 respondents with people in their place of work in varied work situations. Both the interviews and the observations were tape-recorded.

The responses in the interview schedule were properly classified and tabulated in summary form in such a way that a reader could see how each individual respondent's claim on language use stood in relation to that of the other paired with him. Certain descriptive criteria were set up so that the data could be quantified and used as basis for making qualitative statements on the results. Thus, the responses categorized as *almost always, often, sometimes, rarely* and *never*, were given qualitative descriptions and ranks, each with a corresponding arbitrary numerical value.

A summary of the over-all responses of each of the three categories of respondents (professional, semi-professional and non-professional) was then made to obtain a profile of the language use/needs situations among the chosen occupations. The number and percentages were taken on the answers to the questions where those summations were appropriate.

Agreement between reported language use and actual language use was determined by making a frequency count of code incidence in the tape-recorded verbal interactions between the 15 respondents belonging to the first group and their interlocutors. These data exemplifying actual language use were drawn from the subjects' varied work situations. It was not possible to arrive at a uniform number of work situations since, generally, professionals have more work situations than semi-professionals.

Validation of reported language use was carried out by examining the texts and picking out illustrative utterances/conversational exchanges. In some instances, supplementary information gathered from note-taking and the researcher's experiences with people of the occupations involved was used.

On the use of code switching, utterances illustrating code switching were drawn from the texts and separated from those given in individual languages. The utterances displaying code switching within a sentence, or code switching between phrases/clauses, were separated from those illustrating code switching between sentences and conversational code-switching. The code-switched utterances/conversations were then grouped into categories, i.e. English to Pangasinan, etc. and according to functions following the Gumperz model (1976), which was also adopted by Pascasio (1978) in her analysis of Tagalog-English code switching in the business domain.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data gathered show that there is bilingualism or multi-bilingualism in the domain of work in a Pangasinan setting. People of whatever occupation use the dominant vernacular Pangasinan with the most frequency and Pilipino and English in varying degrees of frequency next to Pangasinan. Ilocano is used with the least frequency. The data also show that language use is influenced to a great extent by the person dimension, that is, the language of the interlocutors, and their educational and socio-economic status, the situation, the purpose, and to a lesser extent, the topic.

There is also a tendency among semi-professionals and non-professionals to use Pangasinan and Pilipino equally in formal and informal situations, while professionals

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tend to use the two languages more in informal situations. English is generally used by professionals and semi-professionals in formal situations. In general, the utilitarian or instrumental motive in the choice of certain languages in the field of work is stronger than the integrative motive.

The data also show that more professionals and semi-professionals than non-professionals in a Pangasinan setting tend to code switch in varying degrees of frequency, in the language combinations, English and Pilipino, English and Pangasinan and Pilipino and Pangasinan that they share with interlocutors preferably of equal and lower status, more in informal situations, and for certain integrative purposes. Their use of code-switching is presumably aimed at achieving certain desired effects in their interactions with people and consequently to be effective at work. The use of code-switching likewise greatly depends on the person dimension, that is, the language of the interlocutor and his level of education. It use is also influence by the setting, the role-relationship and to a little extent, the topic. Code-switching, too, serves the same functions identified by Gumperz (1976), the typology of which are: (1) quotations, (2) addressee specification, (3) interjection, (4) repetition and (5) personalization versus objectivization.

The study also revealed that for purposes of oral communication, Pangasinan and Pilipino are needed by people of whatever occupation. Aside from these languages, professionals and semi-professionals need to have adequate skills in English not only for oral communication but also for reading and writing, since English dominates their reading and writing activities. It appears that there is a relationship between language needs in terms of the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and the nature of one's work.

Similarly, the data show that the attitudes to certain languages by people in the domain of work are related to their orientations towards such languages. Regardless of occupation, people in a Pangasinan setting think that Pangasinan, Pilipino and English are necessary for success in their occupations, an indication that they are instrumentally-oriented towards these languages. Thus, they can do without certain other languages such as Spanish, Bicol, Visayan and Ilocano (in that order) because they feel that these languages cannot be instrumental to their success.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the realities of bilingualism and multilingualism as givens in language planning, Fishman (1971: 568-567) points out the role of domains in establishing the links between micro and macro-sociolinguistics. He suggests that micro studies of language use in the various domains can provide useful information for language planners that will enable them to arrive at societal regularities in language use because language varieties are behaviorally and attitudinally associated with particular domains. He stresses that domains are abstracted from notions of domain-appropriate persons, domain-appropriate places, and domain-appropriate times — all of which must be carefully verified by means of observation, interviewing, and/or self-reports, rather than taken for granted.

While some sociolinguistic studies have been made on language use and attitudes in particular Philippine settings, there is a need for more intensive studies on specific domains of language. Since this study used only a few subjects, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted with larger samples to obtain expanded data. With more samples, more sophisticated data treatment may be used in order to obtain more stable results. The study may be replicated in other places outside Luzon or perhaps expanded to cover other domains in order that language planners can arrive at a configuration of societal regularities in language use needed for effective implementation of our bilingual policy.

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