

CURRENT RESEARCH

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURES
OF A SELECTED MANILA COMMUNITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Valuable insights into the role of language in the social setting have been the result of sociolinguistic research into the communication phenomena of bilingualism and multilingualism. As some social scientists have pointed out (Pride and Holmes 1972; Giglioli 1972), it is work of this sort that has revealed clearly some of the ways in which linguistic usage and variations serve to reflect and clarify socio-cultural values.

Sociolinguistic studies that examine and analyze the role and social meaning of the different languages in a multilingual society can be undertaken at two scheme levels, the one logically preceding the other:

The first level, which is sometimes termed a macro-scale study, uses relevant information and data collected from large scale surveys to show national or community norms of linguistic usage and variations. (In the Philippines, one such macro-scale study is the nation-wide *Language Policy Survey of the Philippines* by Otones and Sibayan 1969, undertaken by the Language Study Center of the Philippine Normal College with the assistance of the Ford Foundation and the Asia Foundation.)

Then, against this national norm, one can investigate and test in a micro-scale scheme, how the individual reacts to linguistic pressures and effects variations. Working along this line, this particular research work was undertaken.

2. THE STUDY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

An in-depth sociolinguistic study of a full-range community, this work examines, describes and analyzes the sociolinguistic features of a Manila community taking into consideration items such as the dominant demographic characteristics of the population under study, the linguistic codes used by the people in their communications, the language(s) they want to be used as media of instruction in schools, their linguistic attitudes, values and preferences; and how the demographics of sex, age, education and first language relate to their language-related values and attitudes.

The findings are expected to shed light and understanding on the language situation of the place and provide the needed societal information for a successful bilingual education program in the community. For this, the data can be used as basis for evaluation and modification of the different bilingual education programs/experiments going on in the schools of the community.

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3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 SELECTION OF THE SPEECH COMMUNITY

For this particular work, the speech community of Manuguit (Tondo, Manila) was selected.

Manuguit community was primarily chosen because its size, representativeness and anticipated cooperation were such as to make an in-depth sociolinguistic study possible.

As to size, the community is large enough to be serviced by nine barangays, seven public schools, four chapels of different religious leanings, an obrero market that gives an almost 24-hour marketing service, and an urban population of more than 24,000 individuals.

As to its representativeness, the Manuguit population has a good representation of the larger groups of the City's social structure: middle class, working class and lower class Manilans. The exploratory surveys indicated that the City's main ethnic groups are adequately represented in the Manuguit population: Tagalogs, Pampangueños, Ilokanos, Pangasinenses, Bikolanos, Cebuanos, and the other Visayan-speaking groups. Eighty-three percent of the community people are long-term residents, having lived in the place for at least the last five years.

The anticipated cooperation of the Manuguit informants and my first-hand information of the community in particular were the deciding factors in the selection of this speech neighborhood. Being a resident, I have participated in many of the educational and socio-cultural activities of the place.

3.2. SELECTION OF SUBJECTS/COMMUNITY SAMPLINGS

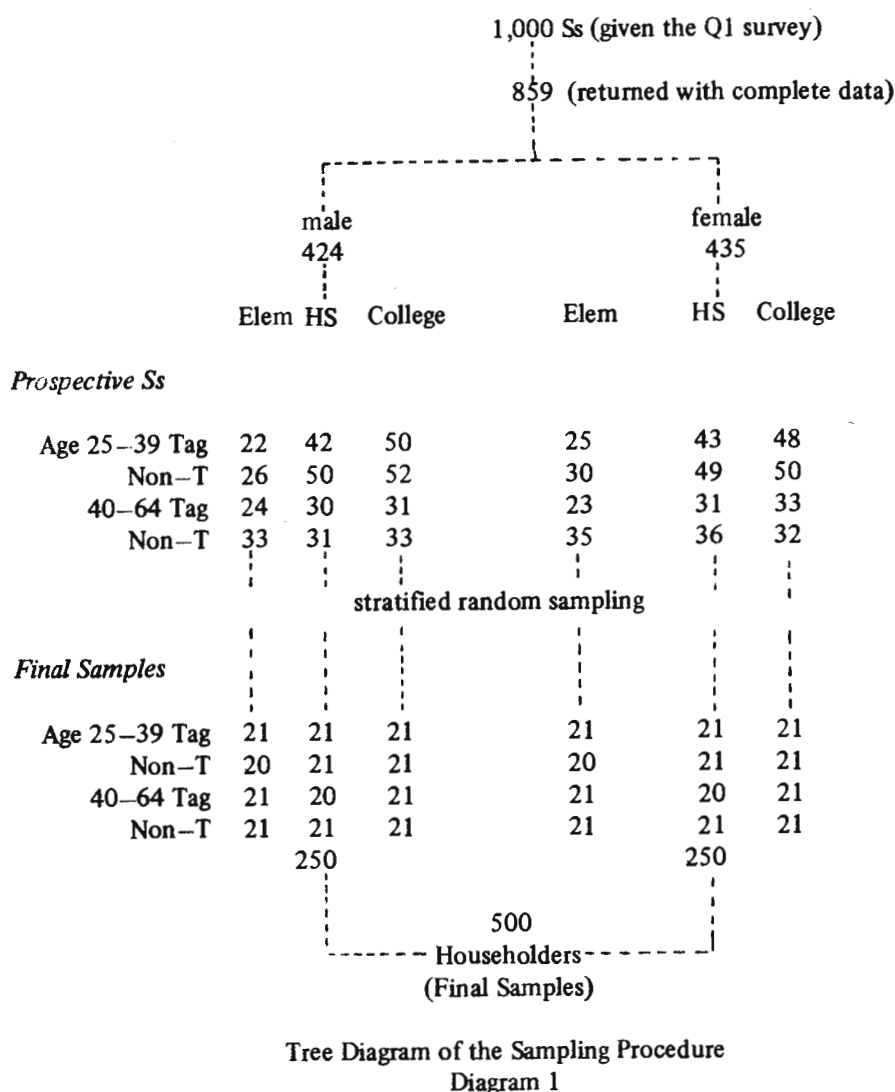
In the selection of Ss, several factors were considered: one of these was that the work had to yield the needed sociolinguistic data for a successful bilingual education program. To attain this, the community samples had to be long-term parent residents (who had lived in the place for at least the last five years and had children studying in the schools of the community).

Based on the survey returns of the 9 block areas (barangay units), simple random sampling would not give an adequate representation of the different ethnic groups in the community. Therefore, stratified random sampling was employed. The stratification was based on the variables of the study: age, sex, education, and first/native language.

A tree diagram of the sampling procedure (see Diagram 1) shows that the final sample of 500 householders are representative residents of the target population.

3.3. COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

The actual community observation and field interviews were done after the validation of the instruments and the preliminary surveys.



As planned, the community was divided into sub-areas or units based on the accommodation and availability of the persons concerned. Working along this line, the field interview progressed as scheduled by block area and/or by barangay unit.

Of the 500 informants in the community sampling, the housewives were the easiest to reach. Some of them were interviewed while doing their routine household chores: while laundering or washing clothes, while exchanging notes with a neighbor, while preparing lunch or dinner, etc.

In one instance during a follow-up assignment, the interview session with one of the housewives on Hermosa Street progressed into a cooking demonstration of a simple dish of *pinakbet* and *tortang salmon*. With the available vegetables, a home meal was prepared jointly without spending beyond the family budget so much so that the day became a truly sociolinguistic occasion for me and my informant.

Throughout the field work, the major problem was centered on the difficulty of locating many of the male informants. In several cases, I had to call two or more times

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before finding the person in. Almost all (241 out of 250) of the male respondents were working. Even on Saturdays and Sundays many could not be found at home. It became necessary to devise a time schedule on a case-to-case basis.

Some of the very first male informants were interviewed early in the morning, immediately after breakfast before their departure for work. This scheme was a revelation because although these persons were the hardest to track down, they were the most accommodating when finally reached.

The same revealing scene held true with the succeeding encounters with the other male informants. Most unforgettable of these were the interviews with the driver informants.

After some unsuccessful attempts, two taxi driver Ss, one on Bagac Street and the other one on Morong Street, were finally reached during their car barn hours. The first one had his car barn hour at 12:00 (noon); hence, I could not refuse the hospitality of the family's lunch table. And the second one had his schedule in the afternoon coinciding with the merienda carbarn of 3:00; a light snack in between the interview questions made it a refreshing session.

Although there was a general tendency to resist and evade interviewers, the male informants of urban Manuguit were not lacking in chivalry and accommodation. Once they were located, they would grant interviews anywhere for the researcher's sake. Some were asked questions while they were at the stand-by sari-sari store, near Jai-alai bookies' counters while waiting for results, on the road junction while waiting for their rides; and still some were reached in barbershops, in the midst of chess or *dama* skirmishes, in beauty parlors and tailor shops.

Subsequent home visits and follow-up interviews were undertaken when there was a need for such.

3.4. STATISTICAL TREATMENT

Three forms of questionnaires (Q1, Q2, and Q3) and two survey/attitude scales (L1 and S1) were used in this in-depth study.

To test whether there were significant differences between the younger set of Ss and the older set of respondents, between the Tagalog Ss and the non-Tagalog, chi square (X^2) analyses were done.

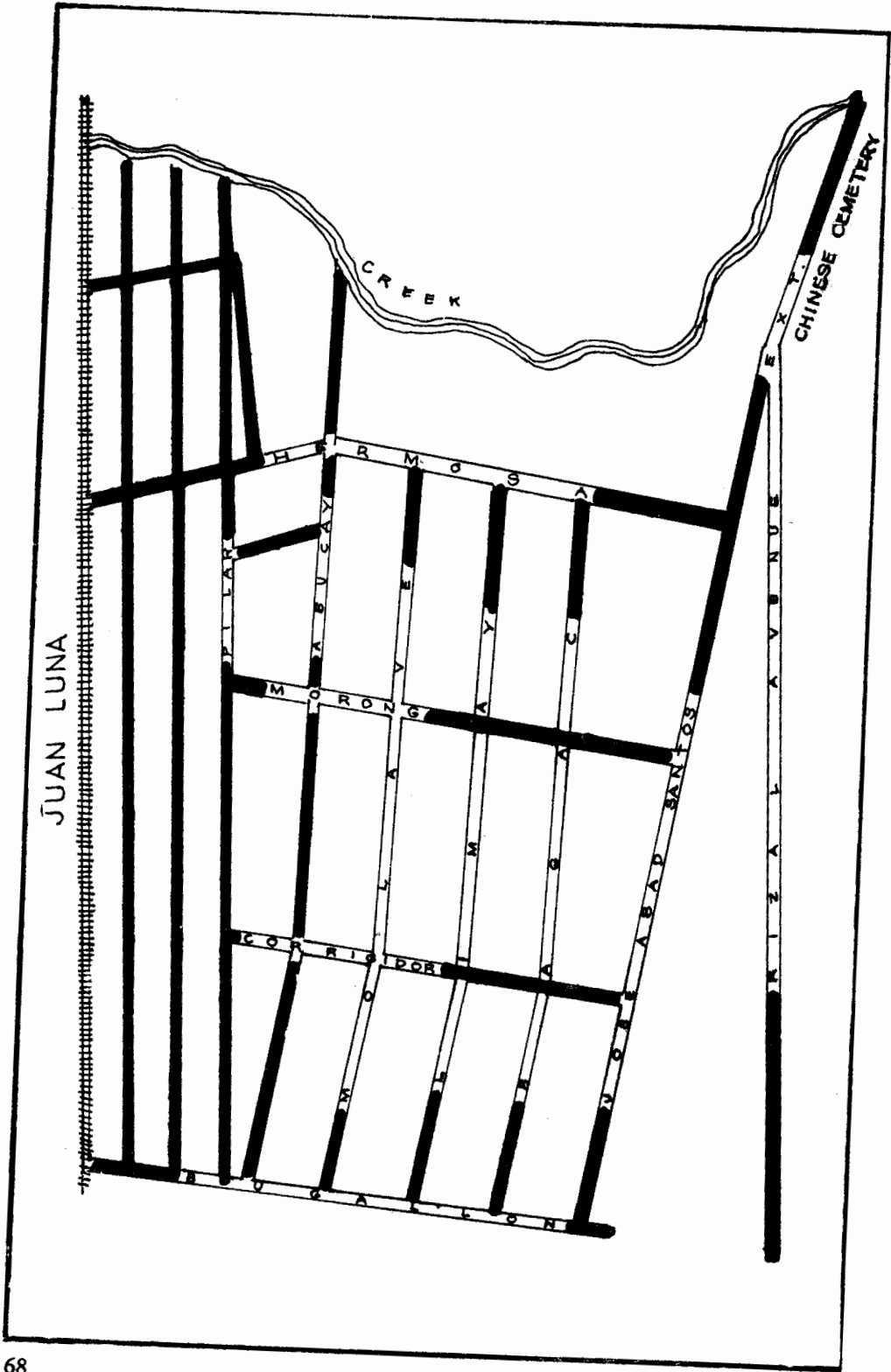
To gauge the gap among the 500 Ss of differing educational attainment (Elementary, High School, College) in connection with their language use, linguistic attitudes and preferences, responses to the question items were tabulated and converted into percentages.

After an interval of eight to ten weeks, 120 informants were re-interviewed. To estimate the reliability of the scale, a correlation between the two sets of scores/responses was computed using the Pearson *r*. The computed reliability coefficient was .89, which implied that the question items yielded consistent results when the attitude was measured for the second time.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. THE MANUGUIT COMMUNITY

Just a block away from the Manila-Caloocan boundary, Manuguit, the speech community under study, lies on the northern tip of Tondo, Manila, near the well-known Chinese Cemetery. Bounded by two major thoroughfares, Abad Santos on the East and Juan Luna on the West, it is accessible to all types of road transportation.



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Having a sizeable land area and traversed by eight community streets, the place when sketched would have a profile as shown in the map.

There are indications to show that Manuguit is a multilingual neighborhood. The study samples, stratified from the different socio-economic groups of the community, show more than 23 linguistic codes: Tagalog/Pilipino, the seven other major Philippine languages (Kapampangan, Ilokano, Bikol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Samar-Leyte, and Pangasinan), five foreign languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and German), and more than ten native vernaculars (Ibanag, Itawes, Chavacano, Ilongo, Cuyonon, Maranao, Waray, Aklanon, etc.).

4.2. LANGUAGE USE

The findings show that Pilipino (which is based on Tagalog) is the primary language for home use. It is the major linguistic code used by the great number of informants in communicating with the different members of the household.

In talking to the spouse, in-laws, relatives and the househelp, Pilipino (sometimes Pilipino and the vernacular/native language) is the language ordinarily used. More vernacular is used with the relatives than with the spouse or in-laws.

Only a small percentage of parent respondents use their native languages with their children. This may partly be explained by the fact that most of these children were born in the place; and since Pilipino is the lingua franca of the neighborhood, there is no functional use or need to know the ethnic language of the parents. They can get along using Pilipino/Tagalog at home, at play and in the community.

4.3. LANGUAGE USE IN THE LARGER NEIGHBORHOOD

The responses given by the respondents in connection with their language use in interacting with the other members of the community show that Pilipino is the major code used.

The materials collected in this portion of the work shed some light on who speaks what language to whom and when.

The data reveal that the majority of the respondents prefer to use English and Pilipino when talking to the teacher, priest and the community official. More Tagalog and vernacular are used when exchanging notes with the neighbor, the beautician and the market vendors.

These findings seem to partly affirm the assumption that Pilipino and the native languages are associated with values of spontaneity and friendship (as when talking to neighbors) and of comradeship (as when talking to the beautician and the vendor); while English is associated with status differential and formality (as when talking to the teacher, the priest and the official).

The findings also sustain the assumption of Fishman et al. (1971) that for a community to maintain two or more languages in a more or less stable manner, each must be associated with a particular subset of complementary community values.

4.4. MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

The question, What language(s) do you want to be used as medium of instruction in the School? was one of the most interest-arousing items in the entire scale. The parent respondents found this very relevant because they felt that they should be consulted on issues that greatly affect the education of their children.

The responses they gave with regards to this issue are tabulated and shown in Table 1.

What language(s) do you want to be used as medium of instruction in the school?

Medium of Instruction	Grade Level Intended			
	Primary	Inter-mediate	High School	College
Pilipino	110	101	78	26
English	86	120	275*	386*
English-Pilipino (Bilingual)	266*	255*	133	80
Pilipino-Vernacular	30	16	8	6
Others	8	8	6	6
Totals	500	500	500	500

**Over-all choice for school use

Table 1

For the elementary level (both primary and intermediate grades), more than one-half of the parent informants prefer English and Pilipino as media of instruction in the school. For this, the bilingual education scheme fits the preference of the people.

However, for High School and College, the first preference is definitely English.

It is interesting to note that at least six respondents (with college background) favored the use of the vernacular (such as Ilokano for the Ilokans; Cebuano for the Cebuanos) from the elementary grades up to the collegiate level. Their reason for this is: 'We can learn faster and communicate better if we use our own native language because the problem of *how to say it* would no longer be a difficulty but rather an added advantage in tackling the problem of *what and when to say it*.'

Surprisingly, parent residents with the least educational attainment (elementary schooling) favored the use of English alone at all levels of learning. Their choice of English as the sole medium of instruction from grade one to College is justified by their reason. They stated that 'our school children of yesterday were academically better-equipped than those of today' because the former had used English in all aspects of classroom work. They felt that since the introduction of Pilipino and the vernacular into the curriculum, the quality of education has deteriorated.

4.5. LANGUAGE ATTITUDE OF THE COMMUNITY PEOPLE

Several items were included in the scale to assess the attitude of the residents toward their languages.

On the question 'What language(s) would you like your children to learn? (Rank them in accordance with your preference)', an overwhelming number of informants (401 out of 500) rank English as the no. 1 language they want for their children. This indicates that most Manuguit residents are aware of the usefulness and importance of English in economic, social and intellectual exchange not only with the outside world but also within the country.

Pilipino comes second in rank. This may be attributed to the growing importance of the country's national language. And from all angles, the people associate Pilipino with nationalism and identity.

It is heartening to find that there are urban respondents (19 Ss) who feel that their native vernaculars are very important and should be the first languages to be learned by the children. These ethnic loyalists have regionalistic or cultural reasons for including their native languages on the list of languages to be learned by their children.

4.6. THE STATUS OF PILIPINO

Although the community people are agreed on the prestige and social as well as economic rewards accruing from English, many of the Ss are uncertain whether this foreign language is in a position to serve as the lingua franca that will unify the Filipinos who speak more than 300 different ethnic languages and dialects.

Parallel with this item is the question on whether Pilipino is an essential factor for the Philippines' unification and national identity. The greater number of the respondents (402 out of 500) gave *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* reactions to this viewpoint. The Ss felt that the national language is almost synonymous with Pilipino identity, and hence, can perform this unifying role better than any other language used in the place.

Another focal point of the study concerns the intrinsic properties of Pilipino as a *national language* and as a *standard language*.

Pride and Holmes (1972) have pointed out that standard languages which symbolize feelings of unification, separateness and prestige qualify as national languages. From all indications, Pilipino has shown its strength in fulfilling these roles. As previously discussed, the community respondents are agreed on the point that Pilipino, not English or any other ethnic language, can unify and consolidate the multilingual Filipinos.

Prestige-wise, Pilipino has consistently fared well in the 'prestige' surveys. It ranks second on the list of important languages the parents want for their children to learn. And based on their responses, the Ss support the idea that Pilipino should be one of the official languages in the Philippines.

With its present qualities, does Pilipino qualify as a standard language?

A standard language should exhibit both 'flexible stability' and 'intellectualization'.

Relevant to assessing this 'intellectualization' process, several items were included in the scale. One of these is the issue on whether Pilipino is developed enough to be used as medium of teaching and tool for learning in the school. In the elementary grades the respondents feel that Pilipino may be used as a medium of instruction or as one of the two media languages in a bilingual scheme; but in high school and college, the Ss' choice is definitely English. The responses of the informants indicate that Pilipino has yet to grow and develop before it can possibly assume the role of English in teaching the content subjects at the secondary and tertiary levels. The responses also indicate that Pilipino has not yet reached that stage of stability when it can be used to encode all sorts of information and topics characteristic of industrialized modern societies.

4.7. THE SOCIAL VARIABLES

How do the demographics of age, sex, education and native/first language relate to the individual's language use and linguistic attitude?

There is evidence to show that the variables of age, sex, educational attainment, and native language of an individual have significant effects on his language use and attitude. What role these factors play and what the extent is of their effects are some of the questions that this study seeks to answer.

On the effect of age, it was found that younger persons tend to be more liberal and positive toward Pilipino than are older informants. Among those in the 25–39 years of age bracket, a majority regard the Tagalog-based national language as an important language to acquire and believe that, if properly developed and propagated, in ten years' time, Pilipino can assume the domains of English in the Philippines.

Although both age groups (the young and the older ones) use Tagalog as their primary language of communication, de-ethnicization manifested by loss of one's native or ethnic language is much more pronounced among the younger Ss than among the older ones.

On the variable of sex, there are no significant differences between the male and the female respondents with regard to their sociolinguistic responses. Both the male and the female parent respondents speak in Tagalog for the greater part of their oral interaction in the neighborhood. Their language choice for school use and the list of important languages are almost identical. Both sex groups (be they fathers or mothers) feel that each of the languages cited has its specific role and qualities, and that it is certainly an advantage for any Filipino to know or acquire as many languages as he can master, most notably English and Pilipino, since these two languages are (by enactment of law) the official languages of the Philippines.

Of all the variables, the educational attainment of the respondent effects the most change in his language usage and linguistic attitude.

The findings show that the Ss with the highest educational attainment (college) tend to be more multilingual than those with lesser educational achievement. The college respondents use more linguistic codes in articulating their thoughts and wants, whereas the Ss of lower educational attainment are limited to only one or two codes (not a single one of the respondents claims to be exclusively monolingual).

In connection with their language choice for school instruction, the parent respondents with a college education differ significantly from those Ss who have undergone less formal education. The former have more liberal views and a positive accepting attitude toward Pilipino and the ethnic languages. Those Ss who opt for the inclusion of Pilipino (and the vernacular) in the school curriculum belong to the college group.

It is interesting to note that there are at least 12 Ss (all have reached the higher levels of learning) who foresee the Filipinization of the school curriculum by using Pilipino and the native languages from elementary school up to college.

These are responses which tend to show that the higher their level of education, the more people tend to reject stereotypes and prejudices and the more they express tolerance of minorities.

On the other hand, almost all of those parent informants who want English as the sole medium of instruction from Grade One up to the Tertiary Stage are those who had the least education (elementary school). Some even go to the extent of tracing the deterioration of education today to the inclusion of Pilipino and the vernaculars in the school program.

4.8. FIRST/NATIVE LANGUAGE

To find the relation of the first language to linguistic attitude and values, the samples in this research project were grouped into two categories: Tagalog (250Ss) and non-Tagalog (250 Ss).

The non-Tagalog informants are native speakers of these ethnic languages: Ilokano/Pangasinense (82 Ss), Pampango (82 Ss), Bikol (82 Ss) and Visayan (Cebuano, Aklanon, Ilongo, etc., 84 Ss).

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The data collected from these informants reveal a number of valuable findings on the language situation of urban Manuguit.

1. For oral communications, the ethnic Tagalogs use Tagalog. Some of those who have gained considerable skill in English use a combination of Tagalog and English when talking to the members of the household and the other members of the larger community.

2. The non-Tagalog community respondents (those people from the different non-Tagalog provinces and rural places who have come to the Big City to work and have lived in the place for at least the last five years) seem to have shifted to Pilipino for the greater part of their oral transactions in the neighborhood.

Nevertheless, there are certain occasions which these Ss claim are better handled in their ethnic languages:

At home when talking about intimate or confidential family matters, more than one-half of these respondents report that they maintain or use their native languages in discussing these matters with their spouses, in-laws and relatives. These responses seem to imply that the non-Tagalog city dwellers switch back to their native tongue when discussing certain topics with their spouses and other persons to whom they are closely related.

3. On what particular occasions do the non-Tagalogs use their ethnic or first languages?

When asked this question, the Ss respond that they speak in their native tongues on these special occasions:

When discussing confidential secret matters

When expressing endearments and intimacy and when attempting to persuade a spouse

When giving vent to an emotional outburst or having a temper tantrum about something

When recalling nostalgic moments.

4. Only a small percentage of the non-Tagalog parents use their vernaculars (or a combination of Pilipino and the vernacular) when conversing with their children.

Among the children spoken to in the vernacular, more than one-half of them maintain or know their mothers' ethnic languages (more than their fathers'). This situation may probably be influenced by the fact the mother and oftentimes the maternal grandparents and relatives stay at home with the children.

5. In connection with their linguistic attitude, both the Tagalog and the non-Tagalog Ss consider English as an important language for the Filipino's economic and intellectual advancement. Their viewpoints seem to sustain the assumption of Gonzalez (1978) that English will be maintained as long as it is socially and economically rewarding to acquire it.

6. After the controversies on the issue of language basis for the national language, it is interesting to know how the urban residents (the non-Tagalog Ss in particular) feel about this issue.

Among the non-Tagalogs, 199 regard Tagalog as a suitable basis for the national language, while 51 strongly disagree.

On the other hand, there are 221 Tagalog respondents agreeing with the viewpoint as against 9 who disagree and 20 who cannot decide or are uncertain regarding pros and cons of this very important language issue.

It is heartening to note that there are 9 Tagalog Ss who feel that not Tagalog but other ethnic languages (especially those which have more speakers) would have been better choices for the basis of the country's national language.

7. On the question of development and propagation of Pilipino, there are more Tagalog respondents (143 out of 250) than non-Tagalog Ss (only 73 out of 250) who sustain the idea that Pilipino, if given the right support and if propagated, will grow and assume the role of English in the different domains in less than 10 years.

8. With regard to the Ss' language choice for school use, the two groups (Tagalog and non-Tagalog) seem to have similar preferences for language medium/media in the classrooms. They favor the use of Pilipino and English (the Bilingual Education scheme) in teaching elementary pupils. For high school and college, the parent respondents (be they Tagalog or non-Tagalog) prefer English.

9. The over-all findings indicate that the great majority of the community people are acutely aware of the advantages of knowing more than one language; that the need of the times is to be proficient not only in one's native language but also in Pilipino, English and in other languages.

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