Multilingualism: An Ethnographic Study on Maranao School Children in Sorsogon City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This sociolinguistic study was conducted to identify the speech varieties learned and used by Maranao school children in their homes, community, school and the madrasah; describe the various contexts they use these languages; identify and describe the language teaching method/s used by their teachers and linguistic behavior and situation connected to their language learning, specifically code-switching and diglossia. As the initial part of a longitudinal social research, the researcher conducted immersion before the actual study. Ethnographic methods were used: participant observation on the children/subjects and unstructured interview on their teachers (informants). The study yielded these results: 1. Maranao is the first language of children born and raised in Sorsogon City. Their parents and relatives, mostly migrants from Lanao del Sur, use it exclusively among each other and also taught it to their children. 2. They also learn Sorsoganon as L2 when they interact with non-Maranao children who speak this dialect common in the dominant community. 3. Filipino and English are learned in the school as media of instruction, using the Sorsoganon mother tongue only as an auxiliary language. 4. Arabic language and writing system which have religious significance among all Muslims, are taught in the madrasah. Arabic script is used as an alternative to the English alphabet when writing in Maranao or even Filipino. 5. Code-switching/-mixing often occur when the subjects combine any of these speech varieties in their utterances. 6. Both the learners and their teachers share the impression that Filipino, English and Arabic (official languages) have higher prestige than Maranao and Sorsoganon (vernaculars).

Keywords: Multilingualism, Language Learning and Teaching, Diglossia, Code-switching, Maranao Language and Culture

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Muslim community in Sorsogon City has existed for more than 20 years, established in the late 1980s when several families migrated from Mindanao and settled in Purok 5 (Barangay Road) of Barangay Balogo – East District. Almost all of these original migrants are from the Maranao ethnic group of Lanao del Sur, and interestingly, many are from the municipality of Malabang, including the main informants of this study. Later, a few Tausug and some balik-Islam (Muslim converts) joined them in this enclave. They earn their modest livelihood through small businesses, usually in sidewalks and small shops in the downtown section of the city.

Relevant to this study, it can be observed that they speak their native Maranao among themselves and use Filipino to converse with others (non-Maranao), usually in transacting business. Their children, however, who are mostly born here, not only learned Filipino and English in the schools but also the local dialect, Central Sorsoganon.
These vernaculars—Central Sorsoganon and Maranao—are mutually unintelligible, which means that interlocutors using them do not understand each other. They also belong to different subgroupings—the first belonging to Meso-Philippine languages, the other Southern Philippine (see McFarland 1994). Although their syntax may be related, both being Philippine languages, their vocabularies are entirely different from each other. In 2000, the NSO Census of Housing and Population lists Maranao as one of the most widely spoken languages in the ARMM—used in 85,710 households in the region and a total of 150,151 households nationwide. A very small proportion from these figures are the Maranao residing in this city, clearly belonging to a minority of its population.

When DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2004, prescribing the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris was issued, the madrasah became a component of the Philippine education system. All madaris in the country were required to adopt and implement a standard curriculum to be recognized and accredited by the government. In the public schools, the enriched curriculum offers instruction in Arabic language and Islamic values for Muslim learners in areas where there is a Muslim population (http://depedaliveprogram.weebly.com/index.html). The DepEd ALIVE Madrasah in Balogo Elementary School which conducts its classes every Saturday is one of the settings observed in this study.

At present, there are around 700-800 Muslim residents in the entire province, and they have small communities in Bulan and Matnog, in addition to that in the city. Although all of the older generations are born in Mindanao, most of their children are born and raised in Sorsogon. Through the support of DepEd, they have also established madaris in each of these three LGUs.

**Objectives**

To understand how children with an indigenous cultural orientation learn and use several speech varieties in different social contexts is the main concern of the research. Since this is the first ethnographic study and immersion conducted in the Maranao community of this city, to set a precedence in this kind of research, is another goal.

The following are the specific objectives of this study:

1. To identify the language varieties acquired/learned and used by Maranao school children in their community as well as in their regular classes and the madrasah;
2. To describe the various contexts/situations these learners use these specific language varieties in the school as well as in their community;
3. To identify and describe language teaching methods used by the asatidz in the madrasah; and
4. To identify and describe linguistic behavior (a) and situation (b) present in and related to the language acquisition/learning process of these children.
   a. Code-switching/mixing (code alternation)
   b. Diglossia/Polylglossia

**Significance of the Study**

This study—the first part of a series of longitudinal sociocultural research on the Maranao in Sorsogon City—will hopefully benefit both the Christian Sorsoganon and the Muslim Maranao through mutual awareness, understanding
and an eventual acceptance and respect for each other’s culture and religion in a harmonious livelihood and coexistence in this city and the province. Knowledge and understanding are always the only alternative to the distrust and violence brought by ignorance.

Understanding how these children acquire, learn and use several languages in the contexts described in this study will also contribute valuable insights to the educational process, especially in the use of the mother tongue or vernacular languages for instruction. This in turn will reinforce the MTB MLE component of the K+12 curriculum.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and key concepts are vital in the understanding of this study and therefore provided with definitions:

1. **Bilingualism** is the ability to speak two (or more) languages with native or near native proficiency, either by an individual speaker (individual bilingualism) or within a society (societal bilingualism) (Fromkin, 2011).
2. **Code-switching/code-mixing** is the movement back and forth between two languages or dialects within the same sentence or discourse (Fromkin, 2011).
3. **Diglossia/Polyglossia** is a term in sociolinguistics for the use of two or more varieties of language for different purposes in the same community (McArthur, 1992).
4. **Ethnography** is social research gathering empirical data from real world contexts, often focusing on relatively small-scale social groups, via a range of unstructured methods including participant observation (Hammersley, 1994, cited in Simpson, 2011, p. 517).
5. **Mother Tongue** is the language(s) in which one grew up as a child, one’s first language (Davies and Elder, 2004, p. 439).
6. **Multilingualism** is the ability to use three or more languages, either separately or in various degrees of code-mixing (McArthur, 1992).
7. **Madrasah** is the Arabic word for “school.” It is a place for learning Islamic values and the Arabic language. Plural is madaris (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2007).
8. **Ustadz** (pl. asatidz) is the Arabic word for “teacher.”
9. **Vernacular** is an indigenous or native language or its variety (dialect) (Davies and Elder, 2004, p. 439).

Related Literature

*The Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (2004) which was edited by Alan Davies and Catherine Elder contains chapters that were written by individual contributors. The most relevant to the research are Chapter 17 “The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics” by Allan Davies, James Dean Brown’s Chapter 19 “Research Methods for Applied Linguistics: Scope, Characteristics, and Standards”, and Chapter 28, which is Heather Lotherington’s “Bilingual Education”. Definitions and discussions of key concepts from this resource are included in various sections of this paper to reinforce the claims asserted.

*The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (2011) edited by James Simpson complements the reference by Davies and Elder (2004) with additional definitions, descriptions and illustrations of the concepts linked to this study. Similar to the latter, the chapters of this volume are also by various contributors. Of utmost importance are Chapter 36 “Linguistic
Ethnography” by Janet Maybin and Karin Tusting and Chapter 39 “Multilingualism” by Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter.

The Oxford Companion to the English Language (1992) features information about English and literature organized in an encyclopedic format. These were contributed by various experts in linguistics and the literary arts and edited by Tom McArthur. Several entries in the definition section of this study as well as supporting details to the discussion are derived from this reference.

Another important reference to this study is Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (2nd edition, 2001) by Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, which guided the researcher in accurately identifying the LT approaches and methods used by the asatidz in delivering their lessons in the madrasah as well as what he was applying on himself in the process of learning Maranao and Arabic. These are the Grammar-Translation method and the Natural Approach (Terrel and Krashen).

Maranao Dialog and Drills (2009) by Almahdi G. Alonto, Abdullah B. Adam, and R. David Zorc, and which was edited by Jason Lobel contains conversations organized in various situations/topics and features an English translation. Sample words and statements were copied and used by the researcher in two ways: first, as a reference to become personally acquainted and eventually learn the Maranao language, and secondly, as prompts for the learners to respond to. He also elicited their meanings from the informants and compared these to those in the book, and discovered that some of the translations are not accurate.

Related Studies

Readings in Philippine Sociolinguistics (2nd edition, 1996) edited by Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista contains several articles that provided significant insights and support in the conduct of this study.

Foremost of these was John Stephen Quakenbush’s “Conclusion of language use and proficiency in a multilingual setting: A sociolinguistic survey of Agutaynen speakers in Palawan, Philippines (1989)”. This study has related subjects (indigenous minority groups) and used similar methods (ethnography, participant observation, and interview) as the present inquiry. More importantly, it also focused on multilingualism and diglossia/polyglossia. The latter contained definitions and descriptions of this linguistic phenomenon by Fergusson (1959), Fishman (1970), Fasold (1984), and Platt (1977), all except the first are applicable to the observed situation in the present investigation.

“Subgrouping and number of the Philippine languages or How many Philippine languages are there?” by Curtis D. McFarland (1994) provides a list of possible subgrouping of speech varieties in the country. In the 7 major subgroupings and their constituents, Central Sorsoganon which is related to Masbateño is classified as III Meso-Philippine Languages – D Central Philippines – 3 North Bisayan –b Central Bisayan. While Maranao is IV Southern Philippine Languages – B Danao. This clearly shows that these linguistic varieties are distinct and not related to each other, thus “mutually unintelligible codes” (p. 110).

In another article by McFarland (1980), “Introduction to A linguistic atlas of
the Philippines”, mutual intelligibility (Bloomfield, 1926), dialect boundaries and linguistic convergence are described and illustrated. These concepts are essential in defining and explaining the multilingual context of the present study, especially the sociolinguistic interaction of the subjects within the larger Sorsogon community.

Linguistics and Language Education in the Philippines and Beyond: A Festschrift in Honor of Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista (2005), edited by Danilo T. Dayag and J S Quakenbush, is another compilation of research articles of which three were vital to the conduct of the present study.

The first, “Bilingual Code-Switching as a Resource for Learning and Teaching: Alternative Reflections on the Language and Education Issue in the Philippines,” Allan B.I. Bernardo discussed the role of bilingualism in the educational process and especially the language behaviors of translation and code-switching which were both observed in this study. He also argued that code-switching performs an important role in language and education particularly in the multilingual context of the Philippines. He also added that it is a legitimate and potent resource in the teaching-learning process.

In “First Language Education: Quality Education for All”, Catherine Young examined the role of first language education in providing appropriate and effective education to achieve the goals of Education for All and suggested measures in which an L1 education component can be adopted and implemented within the formal educational system of multilingual societies such as the Philippines. This has been implemented in the MTB-MLE of the K+12 curriculum as well as in the DepEd ALIVE. Included in this article are discussions of articles 14 and 17 of 1994 UNCHR Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples and UNESCO principles that support mother tongue, multilingual and inter-cultural education.

Last yet very relevant to this research is “The Sociolinguistic Variables in Cross-Cultural Communication” by Emy M. Pascasio, which describes sociolinguistic variables and illustrates how they affect communication across cultures. Among these, domain, topics, communicative functions, attitudes and values, and non-verbal communication are most relevant thus included in the discussion of this study. These variables are most evident in the observed communal and linguistic interactions among Sorsoganons and Maranao in the city, thus included in this investigation.

Policy Research on Access to Quality Basic Education for Muslim Learners (May 2007) is a study prepared by SEAMEO INNOTECH. Its sections on access barriers to basic education by Muslim learners, specifically on poverty, cultural issues and biases, and additional issues/challenges such as the language of instruction, are associated and included to the present inquiry. These conditions reported by the former exists and are observed in the setting of the latter, and have significant influence on the learning of the pupils.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative - sociolinguistic research design is most applicable since this study is based in a community and focuses on the speech features of its members. This is also longitudinal – still
ongoing for 10 months now and designed to continue for another 2-4 years – and collaborative with the stakeholders-subjects of the study, thus the status of the researcher is equal to that of theirs.

The most suitable method for this study is ethnography – especially participant observation – because it is necessary to investigate the language use of the subjects in the community and to provide interpretations in-context with the linguistic phenomena observed. It is subjective because it relies on the contextual perceptions of a phenomenon of both the researcher and the subjects. It must also be noted that the researcher initially assumes an etic perspective (outsider); however, as the study proceeds his view gradually shifts to emic/insider (Davies and Elder 2004, p. 486; Simpson 2011, p. 517). Objectivity can be maintained by focusing on the problem at hand – that is, the cultural meanings revealed by the linguistic usage of the subjects under study (Watson-Gegeo and Ulichny, cited in Nunan 1992).

Furthermore, it is also necessary to investigate the concerns of this study in the natural context in which it occurs. In this manner, it is possible to yield reliable information on the actual language use of the learners in authentic situations and settings uninfluenced by external factors that may alter the outcome of the research. The researcher has to be personally involved in the processes he is observing, with minimal intervention as is possible. And this requires time, acceptance, carefully negotiated access and tact. In this case, it is also open-ended and unstructured (Wellington & Szczerbinski 2007, pp. 80-81). Observations and interactions have been documented in journals and photographs.

However, since the researcher has virtually no knowledge of Maranao and Arabic, he also applies elicitation techniques – in particular, semi-structured oral interview and production tasks. Since this study did not require a large number of informants with varying backgrounds, interviews were preferable and very effective in eliciting the data required. It features both flexibility in format and topic; at the same time, the researcher can control the direction and progress of the interaction. It produces rich information about social relationships and phenomena as well as gives access on these in a profound way (Dowsett, cited in Nunan 1992).

It is a characteristic of this approach that data gathering precedes the formulation of any hypotheses and it also focuses on descriptive investigation and analysis (LeCompte and Goetz, as cited in Nunan 1992). In the present study, data that are obtained through observation and interview are presented first before any hypotheses and findings were formed and discussed: reflectivity and intuition is crucial.

Sampling is opportunistic and purposive. The primary/key informants of this study are six asatidz (2 male and 4 females), all Maranao migrants and proficient in Arabic. The subjects are Maranao children who are mostly born and raised here and have frequent interaction with native Sorsoganons. Balik-Islam (converts) pupils are excluded from this study, since more often than not they do not know Maranao.
It is also important to note that in order “to understand the experiences of an individual or a community from a first-person perspective” (Wellington & Szcerbinski 2007, p. 20), the primary data gathering instrument must be the researcher himself, who has to undergo social immersion in the community of the subjects to be accepted and learn their culture and language. It must be noted that in order for ethnographic techniques – especially participative observation – to yield significant data, the researcher must be socially embedded in the community for a period of time (thus the term immersion) and be recognized before he gains the trust and confidence of its members and proceed with his study.

RESULTS

The results identified by this study are summarized as follows:

1. Maranao is the first language (L1) of the pupils-subjects who are born and raised in Sorsogon City. Their parents and relatives, who are mostly from Lanao and have migrated to this city, use this language exclusively among each other and taught it also to their children at home and in their community. This is evident when the researcher observed kindergarten pupils who speak in this language and do not respond well to Sorsoganon and Filipino. There are parents, however, who also teach Tagalog to their children as well as their native tongue.

2. Sorsoganon is acquired/learned by the learners when they begin to venture out of their homes and community, and come into contact with other children who speak this language variety commonly used in the community of this study. This most often happen in the schools where they attend basic education.

3. Filipino and English are learned in the school context in the beginning of formal education. Regular classes before the implementation of the MTB-MLE component of the K+12 curriculum use these two as primary media/languages of instruction in all subjects, using the mother tongue only as an auxiliary language in the class room. In this latter case, it is often Central Sorsoganon.

4. The Arabic language and writing system are introduced and taught in the madrasah, a common feature in the life of young Muslim learners in Mindanao and other countries with substantial Muslim population. The setting of this study was established in 2008 as part of the ALIVE (Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education) program of the Department of Education.

Table 1. Language Varieties used by the Maranao school children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Variety</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Learning Domain</th>
<th>Learning Agent/s</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maranao</td>
<td>Mother Tongue/L1</td>
<td>Home, Muslim community (minority)</td>
<td>Parents, relatives, neighbors</td>
<td>Intra-ethnic communication such as casual conversations with fellow Maranao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorsoganon</td>
<td>Local Vernacular/L2</td>
<td>Sorsoganon community (dominant)</td>
<td>Sorsoganon classmates and neighbors</td>
<td>Communication with Sorsoganon classmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>Medium of Instruction/National lingua franca</td>
<td>School, Media</td>
<td>Teachers, parents, media</td>
<td>Academic, inter-ethnic communication in Sorsoganon community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Medium of Instruction/official international language</td>
<td>School, Media</td>
<td>Teachers, Media (television, radio,</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**DISCUSSION**

**Immersion in the Muslim community**

Permission from the asatidz to conduct this study was as important as that from the DepEd superintendent and the ALIVE supervisor. Thus, the former was first secured (verbally) and was only followed by the latter (formal, written). The presence of Ustadz Muhammad Callos (a balik-Islam from Prieto Diaz) among the Maranao teachers was a vital factor for the researchers acceptance: as his former BEEd student, he facilitated the introductions and also provided background information about the researcher's which obviously was very favourable.

In the classroom, the researcher's presence was initially received with suspicion by the subjects even though their ustaz introduced him and told them his purpose. A boy from Grade 3 (now 4), Arham, noticed him and directly asked if he were a Muslim. The researcher said no and Arham replied that he thought he was. As weeks passed, the subjects became more familiar of him and became more open to verbal interactions.

Beside routine meetings, community activities and conversations with the imams, a free one-month English grammar review attended by the informants last April contributed to the immersion. Since the researcher refused any payment, they shared food instead and had an exchange of gifts afterwards. A hard-bound copy of the Qur’an in Arabic and English texts is a most treasured present. Given to the researcher’s invitations to their community and their homes followed; eventually the introduction to their families. And most important, the privilege to observe and partake in worship in the masjid, especially during the Eid Fitr.

An important development happened recently: both the asatidz and the moritz always address me formally as “sir”. However, I noticed that by the seventh month of my immersion with them this was replaced by “ustaz”, a sign perhaps means my official recognition in their community. Of equal importance, their fathers and older male relatives now acknowledge me as “brother” during my visits to the community, at school and even when I met them downtown. Some of them accorded me their traditional handshake and also generally replied to the Muslim greeting, asalaam alaykum. The females, who were naturally aloof, now also responded to queries and greetings.

**The Asatidz, the Moritz and the Muslim Community**

The asatidz are proficient in and often use Maranao, Tagalog and Arabic; use of and proficiency in the English language is limited however. For example, Ustadza Rogaya (Gr. II) discusses her lessons in Maranao most of the time and is not very proficient in Tagalog and English, but obviously competent in Arabic especially its written form. Among these teachers, Ustadz Mahmud delivers most of his lessons in Filipino; although he can smoothly shift to Maranao when he speaks casually with his pupils and their parents. As one of the imams of the community, he also delivers his sermons in Filipino and Maranao.

Most of them are high school graduates, with the exception of Ustadz Alibasa (Abdul Wahid) and Najifa. The former had completed a two-year computer technician course in the 1990s besides attendance in a Catholic high school. The latter is a BSEd MAPEH
graduate in Cotabato City and is taking the LET this August. Ustadza Nurus (Norie), who had attended Islamic education in Iran, is the most proficient in English. She explained that even during her schooling, English is more often spoken among the students who came from all over the world.

Even during the researcher's first encounter with kinder pupils under their former teacher, Ustaz Callos, he already noticed that they did not speak Sorsoganon but only the Maranao of their parents. Ustadza Najifa explained that this was because these children have not yet been exposed to the larger dominant community outside their own — they only know the language of the cradle: L1 is indeed Maranao. The brother (Grade 6) of one of the pupils added that they eventually learn Sorsoganon most often in the school than in their neighbourhoods, which are usually off-limits to these young children by their parents. But as they grow older and form friendships at their school, they also begin to venture out of their community. It must be noted that the development of these children’s first language (through acquisition) provides an important basis for second language learning in a formal and serial process (Cummins 2000, cited in Davies and Elder, p. 705). It follows that, if their L1 is undeveloped, then L2 will also be.

One of Ustadza Rogaya’s pupils who is from Mahingan, Caroline (“Carol, in short!”), is of mixed background: a father who is half-Muslim and a mother who is Catholic. She attends regular class at SECS and knows Jumar (“enemy”) and Jumairah (“slightly an enemy”). Although she learns Arabic, she does not speak nor understand Maranao. This is also true with the researcher’s “classmate” James, whose family is balik-Islam but ethnic Sorsoganon. He also learns Arabic in Ustadz Alibasa’s class but cannot understand Maranao.

Jumar and his sister Jumairah belong to Ustadz Mahmod’s class. They are 13 and 12 years old, Grade 6 and 5 pupils at the Sorsogon East Central School in Burabod. Rahimah, the researcher’s “classmate” who is Abdul Rahim’s sister, is also in his class. They live with their family in Sirangan, and Ustadza Najifa is their neighbour and relative. They were both born in Lanao and transferred to this city when Jumar was around 6 years old.

Jamar said that it was very difficult for him at that time to understand his Sorsoganon kindergarten classmates, who spoke in the local vernacular which he didn’t understand. However, with more frequent communication with them and other children in his school and the community he learned it. During the researcher’s conversation with him, he noticed that even the phonological features of his Sorsoganon is already native-like. The same is true with her sister, whom the researcher’s spoke with at SECS in February.

When I asked him about his future plans after his studies, he revealed that he’ll try to be a Qur’an reader like his father who is a muezzin in the masjid (this fact was confirmed by Ustadz Mahmod). Jumar also added that the children in their family can only take leave after reading passages from the Qur’an. This was imposed by their father. To be such, a Muslim must be able to read and intone Arabic very well. This is the instrumental motivation of learning this language.

Pupils from the Muslim community in Balogo and who study in Balogo ES
use/prefer Maranao over Sorsoganon. When, they converse with other Maranao children and relatives, Sorsoganon is unnecessary thus their L1 is reinforced. Balogo ES is where most of these school children study because of its proximity to their community in this barangay.

However, some of these pupils live in barangays (ex. Sirangan, Almendras) outside their community in mixed neighbourhoods where Muslims are a minority. Though these children still learn Maranao as L1, they usually use/prefer Sorsoganon for inter-ethnic communication, especially with other non-Maranao children in the area. They learn Sorsoganon from playmates, with whom they spent their most of the time.

In general, Muslim pupils also account to a very small minority in the classes they belong to (2-7 pupils/class) – even in Balogo ES where majority of them are enrolled. This situation increases the opportunity for these pupils to interact with non-Maranao (i.e. ethnic Sorsoganon) pupils. In this manner they learn Sorsoganon as L2. The learners are completely exposed to/immersed in the L2 which they eventually learn. The researcher duplicates this language learning process on himself in the madrasah and the Muslim community using the natural approach.

All learners have new DepEd-supplied textbooks (Islamic Values Education Learner’s book). However, the asatidz also supplement these with privately procured textbooks that they used in the madaris in Lanao and these were of better quality.

**Language Teaching Methods**

The asatidz were observed using mainly the grammar translation method in teaching Arabic to their learners. This is a way of studying a language that approaches it first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. Vocabulary selection is based solely on the reading texts used, words are taught through word lists, dictionary study and memorization. Reading and writing are major focus, accuracy is emphasized.

The goal of foreign language study is to learn a language in order to read its literature – in this case, the Qur’an. The learners’ L1 is maintained as reference system in the acquisition of L2 (Stern 1983, cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001). It is always observed that in the madrasah, the pupils’ native language – Maranao – is the medium of instruction. Classical Arabic is taught using the teachers’ and learner’s L1. This is very advantageous to them, but not to the few balik-Islam children. However, exposure to Maranao facilitates its acquisition by the latter.

The researcher, on the other hand, used the Natural Approach of Terrel and Krashen in learning Maranao and Arabic. This was described as conforming to the principles of naturalistic language learning in young children, i.e., L1 acquisition. Exposure and input is emphasized rather than practice (drills that aid memorization). Comprehension is also given a central role, and prolonged period of attention to what the learners hear before they try to produce language.
The researcher is currently learning Arabic alphabet in Ustadz Alibasa’s Grade 1 class. The teacher utilizes grammar translation, and he learns Arabic as the pupils do. However, with Maranao he mainly uses the natural approach, language exposure by passive listening to the informants, subjects and their parents during classes, casual talks and meetings. He supplements this by studying the lexical items in the dialogs of Adam et al. (2009), and by elicitation techniques (asking the participants about the meanings of their utterances).

**Code-switching/-mixing**

Code-switching observed among learners was mostly Maranao and Filipino. Arabic expressions such as *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, and *masha'allah* are commonly embedded in Maranao and Filipino statements. The same is true with borrowed English words that have no native language translations. A teacher may begin in Arabic (often an invocation, *Bismillahir rahmanir rahim* – in the Name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate) and shift to Maranao to discuss the lesson. Another may be in the middle of discussing a topic using Filipino, and switch to Maranao to explain some important point or answer a query posed by a pupil in Maranao. The subjects converse with each other in Maranao and shift to Filipino when addressing the researcher, unless he talk with them first in Sorsoganon and in which case they respond likewise.

**Diglossia/ Polyglossia**

The researcher adopted the new “broad” definition of diglossia, asserted for example by Fishman (1967, cited in Davies and Elder 2004, p. 358; cf. Ferguson, 1959 [1972]), which encompassed every case of a multilingual or multidialectal community in which the varieties used occupy different functional domains and have different levels of prestige. Every multi-linguistic community fits this description, including the dominant and minority communities in the study. Here, both the learners and their teachers share the impression that Filipino has higher prestige than Maranao and Sorsoganon; Maranao (H) than Sorsoganon (L); English (H) than Filipino, Maranao, and Sorsoganon (L); but Arabic (H) above all these languages.

However, if Platt’s conception of this linguistic situation is adapted, classifying the five languages will be expanded into H, M (medium), L, and even a DH (dummy H). The latter category is defined as “speech varieties of which some of the members have a certain knowledge, and which are given prestige ratings by the speakers and are even recognized by the government, -media, or prestige groups within the speech community, but which are not in fact utilized extensively in any domain” (Platt 1977, cited in Quakenbush 1989, pp. 35-36). He also advocated the use of “multilingualism” and “polyglossia” which is more appropriate in this study’s setting.

In this version, Filipino is clearly the speech with the greatest use and also high prestige – it is not only used in the classroom but also more preferred as *lingua franca* in the community. Arabic and English, although consciously identified as H, are only used in the religious and academic contexts but rarely beyond these; thus considered as dummy H.
Table 2. Status of Language Varieties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Status/Prestige (Fishman 1970)*</th>
<th>Status/Prestige (Platt 1977)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maranao</td>
<td>H as vernacular</td>
<td>L1 (minority speech but preferred by both subjects and informants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorsoganon</td>
<td>L as vernacular</td>
<td>L2 (dominant vernacular language in the community but only used by the subjects in inter-ethnic communication; rarely learned and used by their parents nor the informants although many can understand it already)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>H as medium of instruction and national official language</td>
<td>H3 (beyond its classroom use, more preferred medium for inter-ethnic interactions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>H as medium of instruction/official language</td>
<td>H2/DH (only used in the school context)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>H as language of religion (only Classical Arabic is taught in the madrasah)</td>
<td>H1/DH (as language of religion, this is exclusively used in the masjid and the madrasah)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the micro-context of home (which could be mono-, bi-, or multi-lingual/cultural), there could be generations of family members who have different language competencies and preferences. These speech varieties may also have variable levels of status within the community, which itself might function in a variety of languages, despite national profile (Davies and Elder, p. 701). Maranao is learned at home and reinforced in the madrasah and the Muslim community. It is used exclusively for intra-ethnic communication.

In the context of the community, Filipino is more preferred than Sorsoganon for inter-ethnic communication, especially when speaking with persons deemed as possessing high social status. Although most Maranao children learn the latter, their parents prefer not to although many of them can understand it and even Bikolano which is not included in this study. This was confirmed in an interview with one of the parents of the subjects, the eldest sister of Ustadz Alibasa and Nurus. She has resided in the city for more than 23 years now and has not learned the dominant native language except common words and phrases, but her 10 children who were born and raised here are fluent in it.

Even before the researcher's had been accepted by his subjects, they always address me in Tagalog than in Sorsoganon in different circumstances unless he spoke the them using the latter. However, they commonly use Sorsoganon with their non-Maranao classmates. This confirms the high value they have assigned to Tagalog as the national official language and lingua franca. The children believe that it is more polite and respectful to use the latter than the former when talking with what they identify as persons of authority (e.g. teachers). In the context of the community, Filipino is also preferred over Sorsoganon for inter-ethnic communication, especially when speaking with persons deemed as possessing high social status.

In the case of Arabic, history shows that the most influential languages are those supported by institutions such as religion, education, government and the professions. In addition, the interrelationship between religion, language, and literacy continues “to sustain instruction of and in languages of liturgical significance” (Davies and Elder 2004, p. 696). Thus, Arabic in its
classical form is taught in all madaris worldwide to enable Muslims to read Islamic scriptures and understand the language of religion. This is also emphasized in the ALIVE madrasah; and the asatidz are only familiar with this and thus teach its classical form to the moritz. The contemporary colloquial form which is known to our Middle East OFWs are considered as inappropriate. It is also observed that between two foreign languages, the asatidz give much higher status to Arabic than English in this context. This is shown when I presented to them surahs from the Qur’an translated into English; the two imams disregarded these and instead intoned the same chapters in Arabic. This illustrates their preference and proficiency in Arabic.

CONCLUSION

The sense of self of an individual is often connected with the language(s) in which one grew up as a child, one’s first language, mother tongue. This sense of self, his personal identity, is closely associated with the power that being a native speaker gives. Such power is very hard to attain in any additional acquired language, however successful the acquisition (Davies and Elder 2004, p. 439). Most Maranao children in Sorsogon City, who have acquired their parents’ L1 and also learned the vernacular of the dominant community as L2, exhibit considerable control and mastery in the use of these speech varieties. Thus, as individual persons, they can effectively function in both settings with confidence – a communicative ability that neither their parents nor native Sorsoganons possess (see figure).

In addition, the cultural identity of a people is encoded and signaled by the language varieties they use and prefer. In the sociocultural context, this mediates their personal, social, cultural and language affiliations through their language repertoire (Davies and Elder, p. 701). Although still maintaining a strong connection to their ethnic heritage, these children have unknowingly created a bridge across the sociocultural barrier between their people and the Sorsoganon by learning and accommodating the latter’s native dialect into their own. This strengthens communication between their communities, and eventually may lead to a mutually beneficial social synergy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An orientation for teachers who will handle Muslim pupils in their regular classes must be designed and required by DepEd administrators to ensure that they will deliver their lessons with sensitivity and utmost consideration to the religion and culture of the Maranao and other learners from the various indigenous groups in our country.

![Figure 1. The Maranao School Children and their Communities](image-url)
2. The local government unit through DepEd must establish an effective bilingual education policy supported by a political ideology that rejects a singularity of cultural vision and works toward understanding across cultural and linguistic difference in order to enrich the learners’ educational experience (Davies and Elder, p. 698). This policy may eventually lead to the creation of programs that will regenerate and revitalize threatened languages by teaching them to pupils from minority indigenous groups, such as in the case of the Maranao children.

3. Minority language learners can also be empowered by having their home language/L1 and culture incorporated into the curriculum. In addition, smaller communities must be encouraged to participate in their children’s education.

4. Researcher/s must learn the basics of the Maranao language (vocabulary, word and sentence formation) in order to understand and communicate more effectively with the informants and subjects. It may also be necessary to learn the Arabic language and especially the writing system to recreate the language learning experience of the pupils/subjects.

REFERENCES


