

# Multilingualism in Action The Case of Aytas in the Mountains of Bamban Tarlac

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the case of multilingualism, particularly the languages used by Ayta Mag-Antsi speakers in Sitios San Martin, Buok, Burog, and Sta. Rosa in Bamban, Tarlac. This paper used a synchronic approach survey, which implies that this study focuses on the languages as they are currently being used by an ethnolinguistic community. A researcher-made questionnaire that determined the frequency and percentage of distribution of language used by the heritage speakers (i.e., from the children to the elderly) in Sitios San Martin, Burog, and Santa Rosa in two domains: (1) home domain and (2) outside domain was utilized. The results revealed that multilingualism is certainly alive in the community, and the three languages frequently used by the communities are Mag-Antsi, Kapampangan, and Filipino. Results also revealed that children have the tendency to use other languages than their heritage language. Although a high level of multilingualism is observed, it is equally important for this ethnolinguistic community to understand that the languages that they have access to or aspire can greatly influence the revitalization of their heritage language. Hence, properly managed language policy can help to ensure or at least minimize the negative effect on their first language, culture, and most importantly, the local identity of the children and elderly in the communities.

*Keywords: multilingualism, ethnolinguistic community, heritage speakers, language*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language as a way of communication is deemed to be the most important attribute of humans. This attribute is governed by rules, which are important in sending appropriate register to the members of a speech community. The appropriate use of language is necessary in giving information, establishing rapport, expressing of feelings, emotions, and ideas, exerting authority, and even, as an identity marker. Since naturally, humans are endowed with the ability to learn more than three languages, terms such as bilingualism, trilingualism, and multilingualism emerged. This paper focused on the phenomenon of multilingualism. It further treats multilingualism as both bilingualism (where the speaker can use two languages) and trilingualism (where the speaker can speak three languages), and sometimes, even more than three languages. There is an important connection among language, culture, and even survival in the environment. This means that languages as time passes by become fine-tuned to environmental conditions. Languages and culture certainly evolved; trading from communities to communities may influence the progress or “dying out” of these two. This rapid change can proceed a long way before it is being noticed by an ethnolinguistic community. Probably, one reason for this is that the next generations of users of language, i.e., the children, have this natural ability and that they effortlessly learn multiple languages that they also unconsciously take for granted immense amount of complicated knowledge being construed and adopted by the children. On the other hand, adult users of language use particular language for specific

reason. This can be social, religious, or economic reasons. With this, a speaker becomes more efficient users of the environment and its resources because of language. In the case of Ayta as ethnolinguistic community, language plays an important role to communicate with the nearby towns that provide them their primary source of living.

There has been research published describing the language vitality of ethnolinguistic groups (Coluzzi, P., 2018; Schreiber, L. & Sitaridou, I., 2017; Beine, D.K. & SIL International, 2013). There is a dearth of research in terms of language vitality of Mag-Antsi language; this language, which is considered a Sambalic language with around 4,200 speakers (Stock, 2005), plays an important role in maintaining the identity and cultural heritage of Aytas. It is of particular interest on the part of the proponent to determine the language use of Aytas living in Sitios San Martin, Buok, Burog, and Sta. Rosa in Bamban, Tarlac. Furthermore, this paper investigated the use of languages in home domain and outside domain. Home domain includes language used in the home, language used by the respondent with children, language that children use with other children, language used with spouse, and language used in private prayers. This gives emphasis on the family's home language practices. Outside domain includes language used with other people, language used in community ceremonial events, and whether the respondent ever uses any other language than Mag-Antsi with another person.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This paper utilized a quantitative descriptive approach where an adapted survey questionnaire developed by Breine (2013) was used. 82 participants from Sitios Burog, San Martin (SM), and Sta. Rosa were invited to answer the survey.

A total of 82 participants from Sitio Burog (n = 22, 26.8%), SM (n = 30, 36.6%) and Sta. Rosa (n = 30, 36.6%) participated in the Study. The three sitios are in the mountainous area in Bamban, Tarlac. Most of the participants finished elementary level and very few finished a bachelor's degree. All 82 participants speak Ayta Mag-Antsi as their heritage language.

This study adapted a survey questionnaire developed by Breine (2013). The research questionnaire has two major divisions that investigated the language use in home domain and outside domain. Home domain includes language used in the home, language used by the respondent with children, language that children use with other children, language used with older men, language used with younger men, and language used in private prayers. This gives emphasis on the family's home language practices. Outside domain includes language used with other people, language used in community ceremonial events, and whether the respondent ever uses any other language than Mag-antsi with another person. The survey questionnaire was written in Filipino, although the research partner who is also a heritage speaker from the community translated some questions that may not be understood by the respondents.

The survey questionnaire was distributed individually at home. A research partner, also a heritage speaker from the community, was first oriented on the proceedings and importance of the study to the community, monitored and guided each of the research participants in answering the questionnaire. Prior to the distribution of the survey questionnaire, a meeting was held explaining the objectives of the study to the members of the community. These members were considered as leaders of the three Sitios: Burog, SM, and Santa Rosa.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the results of the study:

#### A. Home Domain:

Home domains include the languages used at home, languages used in speaking with their children, languages used with spouse, and languages used in private prayer.

Table 1.

Frequency and percentage distribution of languages used at home

Language	Frequency and Percentage	Sitio			Total
		SM	Burog	Sta. Rosa	
Mag-antsi	Count	29	9	21	59
	% of Total	35.4%	11.0%	25.6%	72.0%
Kapampangan	Count	25	13	11	49
	% of Total	30.5%	15.9%	13.4%	59.8%
Filipino	Count	18	10	14	42
	% of Total	22.0%	12.2%	17.1%	51.2%
Bisaya	Count	1	5	1	7
	% of Total	1.2%	6.1%	1.2%	8.5%
Ilonggo	Count	0	0	2	2
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%
Total	Count	30	22	30	82
	% of Total	36.6%	26.8%	36.6%	100.0%

Table 1 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of Language used at home according to Sitio. Results revealed that most of the participants are using Mag-Antsi (n = 59, 72.0%) or Kapampangan (n = 49, 59.8%). Specifically, Mag-Antsi is being used by most of the participants in Sitio SM (n = 29, 35.4%), and in Sitio Sta. Rosa (n = 21, 25.6%) while Kapampangan in Sitio Burog (n = 13, 15.9%).

Table 2: Languages used in speaking with their children

Language	Frequency and Percentage	Sitio			Total
		SM	Burog	Sta. Rosa	
Mag-antsi	Count	25	8	16	49
	% of Total	30.5%	9.8%	19.5%	59.8%
Kapampangan	Count	24	13	17	54
	% of Total	29.3%	15.9%	20.7%	65.9%
Filipino	Count	15	11	13	39
	% of Total	18.3%	13.4%	15.9%	47.6%
Ilonggo	Count	0	0	2	2

	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%
Total	Count	30	22	30	82
	% of Total	36.6%	26.8%	36.6%	100.0%

Table 2 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of language used by the respondent with their children. Results revealed that most of the participants with children are using Kapampangan (n = 54, 65.9%) or Mag-Antsi (n = 49, 59.8%). Specifically, Mag-Antsi is being used by most of the participants with children in Sitio SM (n = 25, 30.5%), while Kapampangan in Sito Burog (n = 13, 15.9%) and in Sitio Sta. Rosa (n = 17, 20.7%).

Table 3: Languages used with spouse

Language	Frequency and Percentage	Sitio			Total
		SM	Burog	Sta. Rosa	
Mag-antsi	Count	26	9	22	57
	% of Total	32.1%	11.1%	27.2%	70.4%
Kapampangan	Count	15	9	7	31
	% of Total	18.5%	11.1%	8.6%	38.3%
Filipino	Count	6	9	11	26
	% of Total	7.4%	11.1%	13.6%	32.1%
Bisaya	Count	1	0	1	2
	% of Total	1.2%	0.0%	1.2%	2.5%
Bicol	Count	0	3	3	6
	% of Total	0.0%	3.7%	3.7%	7.4%
Total	Count	30	22	30	82
	% of Total	36.6%	26.8%	36.6%	100.0%

Table 3 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of language used with their spouse. The language used with their spouse is Mag-antsi (n = 57, 70.4%). Specifically, Mag-Antsi is the language that is mostly used in Sitio SM (n = 26, 32.1%) and Sitio Sta. Rosa (n = 22, 27.2%).

Table 4: Languages used in private prayer

Language	Frequency and Percentage	Sitio			Total
		SM	Burog	Sta. Rosa	
Mag-antsi	Count	3	5	7	15
	% of Total	3.7%	6.2%	8.6%	18.5%
Kapampangan	Count	26	15	9	50
	% of Total	32.1%	18.5%	11.1%	61.7%
Filipino	Count	24	18	25	67

	% of Total	29.6%	22.2%	30.9%	82.7%
Total	Count	30	22	30	82
	% of Total	36.6%	26.8%	36.6%	100.0%

Table 4 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of language used in prayer. The language that is mostly used by the participants in prayer is Filipino (n = 67, 82.7%) or Kapampangan (n = 50, 61.7%). Kapampangan is most used in sitio SM (n = 26, 32.1%) while Filipino in sitio Burog (n = 18, 22.2%) and in sitio Sta. Rosa (n = 25, 30.9%).

## B. Outside Domain

Outside domains include the languages used with other people in the community, languages used by the children in the community, and languages used in community ceremonial events.

Table 5: Languages used with other people in the community

Language	Frequency and Percentage	Sitio			Total
		SM	Burog	Sta. Rosa	
Mag-antsi	Count	23	4	10	37
	% of Total	29.9%	5.2%	13.0%	48.1%
Kapampangan	Count	25	9	10	44
	% of Total	32.5%	11.7%	13.0%	57.1%
Filipino	Count	19	19	23	61
	% of Total	24.7%	24.7%	29.9%	79.2%
Others	Count	0	0	3	3
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%	3.9%
Total	Count	30	22	30	82
	% of Total	36.6%	26.8%	36.6%	100.0%

Table 5 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of language that respondents used with other people in the community. The language that is mostly used by the participants with other people is Filipino (n = 61, 79.2%). Filipino is the language that is mostly used in Sitio Burog (n = 19, 24.7%) and in Sitio Sta Rosa (n = 23, 29.9%) but Kapampangan in Sitio SM (n = 25, 32.5%).

Table 6: Languages used by the children in the community

Language	Frequency and Percentage	Sitio			Total
		SM	Burog	Sta. Rosa	
Mag-antsi	Count	18	6	15	39
	% of Total	23.7%	7.9%	19.7%	51.3%
Kapampangan	Count	24	19	20	63

Filipino	% of Total	31.6%	25.0%	26.3%	82.9%
	Count	17	11	19	47
Total	% of Total	22.4%	14.5%	25.0%	61.8%
	Count	30	22	30	82
	% of Total	36.6%	26.8%	36.6%	100.0%

Table 6 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of language that children used outside the school (in community) according to Sitio. The language that is mostly used by the children in the community is Kapampangan (n = 63, 82.9%). Moreover, Kapampangan is the language that is mostly used in sitio SM (n = 24, 31.6%), Sitio Burog (n = 19, 25.0%), and in Sitio Sta. Rosa (n = 20, 26.3%).

Table 7: Languages used in community ceremonial events

Language	Frequency and Percentage	Sitio			Total
		SM	Burog	Sta. Rosa	
Mag-antsi	Count	12	8	22	42
	% of Total	14.6%	9.8%	26.8%	51.2%
Kapampangan	Count	26	15	16	57
	% of Total	31.7%	18.3%	19.5%	69.5%
Filipino	Count	11	13	13	37
	% of Total	13.4%	15.9%	15.9%	45.1%
Total	Count	30	22	30	82
	% of Total	36.6%	26.8%	36.6%	100.0%

Table 7 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of languages used in community ceremonial events. Results revealed that Kapampangan is the language that is mostly used by the participants (n = 57, 69.5%) as can be seen in Sitio SM (n = 26, 31.7%) and in Sitio Burog (n = 15, 18.3%); however, Mag-antsi is used in Sitio Sta. Rosa (n = 22, 26.8%).

Evidently, the results revealed that the Ayta ethnolinguistic community uses more than two languages. Moreover, the language that is mostly used by the said community in home domain and outside domain is Kapampangan. This language is spoken in Pampanga, and it is also dominant in Southern Tarlac.

This implies that the respondents are using the dominant language in the community (i.e.) Kapampangan, not their heritage language (i.e. Mag-Antsi). Fishman (1991) also observed the same scenario in the reality of language loss in the United States of America. He found that this language loss can occur completely within three generations (as cited in Szilágyi, Giambo & Szecsi, 2013). In the case of the children in the three communities, it was evident that they use Kapampangan in communicating

with other members of the community. With this phenomenon, it can be inferred that heritage language loss is imminent in the three communities as more and more members of the community are using Kapampangan especially among the generation of the community's children today. In terms of the connection between age and heritage language loss, findings show that younger learners are more at risk to miss proficiency in their heritage language if the appropriate preemptive measures are not taken (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; MacSwan, 2000; Porcel, 2006). According to Wang, one of the key contributors to heritage language loss is the negative connections between the heritage language and the school, specifically "negative peer pressure, discrimination, assimilative nature of curriculum," and "absence of opportunities to learn and speak the heritage language in school" (2009, p. 15-16). Crawford agrees that societal anxiety causes a shift of values within individuals which manifests itself in the inattention of the heritage language (2000). With this, Hinton, and Hale (2001) proposed five main approaches to language revitalisation: school-based programs, out of school programs for children (after school, summer programs), adult language programs, documentation and materials development, and home-based programs.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Multilingualism is evident in the three communities, namely Sitio San Martin, Burog, and Santa Rosa. The occurrences where the children of their generation in the communities speak a non-heritage language may contribute to the imminent language loss of their heritage language, which is Ayta Mag-Antsi. As the dominant language (i.e., Kapampangan) is widely spoken in the three ethnolinguistic communities, it is evident that Mag-Antsi speakers may face the subtractive bilingualism, which is characterized by a levied division between two language, one can be attained, and the other one can be lost. As evident in the community, children may need to embrace Kapampangan at the expense of their heritage language. Many people, including educators, curricularists, school administrators, political leaders, mothers, and guardians feel this dichotomy as to which language should be taught and learned both in school, community, or at home. There would always be a contention about this; however, it is always important to be reminded that heritage language maintenance is highly advantageous to minority children's cognitive, educational, and social-emotional development, not counting the very important role of culture and identity.

## CONSENT (WHEREVER APPLICABLE)

"All authors declare that 'written informed consent was obtained from the patient (or other approved parties) for publication of this case report and accompanying images. A copy of the written consent is available for review by the Editorial office/Chief Editor/Editorial Board members of this journal."

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