

Regional Accent in a Different Language Setting

Marcus Leiner Carillo¹, John Aaron Lacanlale², Anne Loraine Mempin³, Ramil Santos⁴

^{1,2,3,4}School of Education, Arts and Sciences, National University Philippines, Philippines

Email address: ramilsantos4285@gmail.com

Abstract— In the contemporary landscape shaped by globalization and increased human mobility, linguistic diversity stands as a defining feature of societies. The experiences of Bisayan language speakers living in Tagalog-speaking contexts in the linguistically varied Philippines are the main subject of this qualitative ethnographic study. With 20 purposively sampled participants, the research aims to illuminate the cultural and linguistic challenges faced by Bisaya individuals on a daily basis. Thematic analysis is utilized to identify patterns and themes within the data. The study reveals that Bisayan language speakers primarily use their native language with family and fellow Bisayan language speakers, adapting to the language of their current location when necessary. Challenges include workplace-related issues, accent perceptions, and language and communication hurdles in a Tagalog-speaking environment. Positive experiences revolve around enhanced communication, cultural understanding, and a sense of belonging. The findings underscore the impact of positive stereotypes on identity, contributing to a sense of pride among Bisayan language speakers. Limitations include the study's focus on Bisayan language speakers and reliance on self-reported data, suggesting the need for more inclusive research methods. Recommendations include cross-cultural training, educational initiatives, and public awareness campaigns to foster understanding and appreciation of linguistic diversity.

Keywords— Bisaya, Filipino Language, Native Language, Regional Accent.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's era characterized by the forces of globalization and increased human mobility, linguistic diversity has emerged as a fundamental and defining feature of contemporary societies. The coexistence of distinct linguistic communities within these societies often leads individuals to navigate linguistic environments that differ from their native tongues. As Bisayan language speakers navigate daily life in a linguistic milieu different from their native tongue, questions surrounding linguistic adaptation, cultural identity, and the social dynamics that emerge from these encounters come to the forefront (Parba, 2018).

The Philippines serves as an intriguing case study within this rich tapestry of language dynamics. It is a country well known for its astounding diversity of languages and dialects, as well as its historic writing systems and scripts (Galvez et al., 2023). Beyond just showing one's linguistic background, accents play a significant role in the formation of both individual and group identities (Coupland & Garret, 2010). The Philippines, a linguistically diverse nation boasting a stunning array of over 170 languages (Ethnologue, 2022), presents a unique landscape where linguistic diversity is both a source of cultural pride and a potential barrier to effective communication. People in multilingual societies typically use

many languages and dialects in their daily lives, each of which serves a different purpose in their work, education, and social relationships (Cenoz, 2009). People whose first language is not their own may struggle with their sense of self if their speech patterns do not reflect who they believe themselves to be (Pavlenko et al., 2020).

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic study is to explore the experiences of Bisayan language speakers living in situations where Tagalog is the primary language. Its primary objective is to shed light on the cultural and linguistic challenges that these individuals encounter on a day-to-day basis. With in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, behaviors, and interactions of Bisayan language speakers. By doing this, it hopes to offer insightful information about the distinctive language and cultural adjustments made by this community. The study promises to offer a comprehensive understanding of how language impacts identity and relationships, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced comprehension of the intricate dynamics of linguistic diversity within the Philippines.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policies and raise societal awareness regarding linguistic diversity and inclusivity within the Philippines. By delving deeply into the experiences of Bisayan language speakers, it has the potential to provide valuable insights into the complexities of language-based identity, and facilitating effective communication in multicultural settings. This work also upholds a strong commitment to methodological rigor and ethical issues, providing a useful model for conducting research in culturally and linguistically diverse situations that can be used as a guide for future research.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Methods

The chosen research method for this study is a qualitative-thematic approach, specifically employing an ethnographic research design. This approach is best suited to explore and understand the lived experiences of Bisayan language speakers who are in a Tagalog-speaking environment. When looking for in-depth understanding of human experiences and cultural phenomena, qualitative research is especially useful when using an ethnographic framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ethnographic method used in this study will allow the researcher to look closely at the relationships, experiences, and behaviors of people who speak Bisayan, providing insight into the particular difficulties and adaptations that these people face on both a cultural and linguistic level.

B. Participants of the Study

The participants in this study are Bisayan language speakers in a Tagalog-speaking environment. The researchers interviewed a sample size of 20 participants. The sampling method employed was purposive sampling. This method was chosen to ensure that participants possessed the specific linguistic characteristics and experiences relevant to the research focus. Care was taken to ensure diversity in age, gender, and background to capture a comprehensive range of experiences.

C. Instrument and Data Gathering Procedure

The primary instrument utilized for data collection was a structured interview. Structured interviews are well-suited for qualitative research as they allow for consistency in data collection while still permitting participants to provide detailed narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Interviews were conducted via online platforms, which was chosen as the mode of communication to accommodate geographical dispersion. The interview guide, constructed based on a review of existing literature, included open-ended questions designed to elicit comprehensive responses about participants' lived experiences, challenges faced due to their Bisaya accent in a Tagalog-speaking environment. The instrument underwent peer debriefing, and 3 experts checked the validity of the contents of the instrument.

D. Data Analysis

This study followed a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a widely accepted method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. The process began with familiarization, where the researcher immersed themselves in the interview data by reading and re-reading transcripts. Then, initial codes were generated to capture significant statements or concepts related to the research objectives. These codes were grouped into themes through iterative review, and themes were refined and named to create a comprehensive understanding of the data.

E. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were meticulously addressed throughout the research process. The following steps were taken:

Informed Consent: Prior to participating in the study, participants were presented with a consent form explaining the research's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants provided written informed consent to participate.

Data Privacy Compliance: The study fully adhered to the Data Privacy Act of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 10173). All participant data was handled with strict confidentiality, stored securely, and anonymized to protect their identities.

APA 7th Format: The study followed the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition format for citations, referencing, and reporting results, ensuring proper citation of sources, manuscript formatting, and constructing a reference list.

III. RESULTS

Based on the provided responses to the question about

when and in what contexts the respondents primarily use the Bisayan languages in their daily lives, we can identify the following condensed meaning units, codes, and themes;

TABLE I. Thematic Analysis of Data Gathered for Question 1.

Codes	Themes	Theme Description
still use it	Frequency of Language Use	Participants discuss how frequently they use the Bisaya or Tagalog language in their daily lives, highlighting variations in usage.
don't use it very often		
use it every day		
not often		
communicating with family	Purpose of Language Use	Participants describe the specific contexts and purposes for using the Bisaya or Tagalog language, such as family communication, discussions, and interactions with people who share the same language
conversations with fellow Bisayan language speakers		
engaging in discussions		
talking to relatives		
speaking with people who understand Bisaya	Geographical Influence on Language Use	Respondents mention the impact of their geographical location on their language use, with some using Bisaya more in specific locations or circumstances.
relatives in Manila		
different place		
not often in Manila	Selective Language Use	Participants express selectivity in using the Bisayan languages, choosing to communicate in it primarily with those who can understand, and acknowledging potential communication challenges with speakers of different languages.
speak Bisaya to people who understand		
dissonant with speakers of other languages	Emotional Connection to Language	Participants highlight the emotional connection and significance of using the Bisayan languages, expressing joy and a sense of belonging when communicating with fellow Bisaya or countrymen. Some also emphasize the importance of language diversity in their daily lives.
feel happy and at home		
important in daily life		

The respondents use Bisaya primarily with family members, fellow Bisayan language speakers, and individuals who understand the language, while adapting to the language of their current location when necessary. Additionally, some respondents find a sense of happiness and belonging when communicating in their native language in a diverse linguistic environment.

We may identify the following condensed meaning units, codes, and themes based on the replies given to the question on the difficulties they faced while residing in Manila because of their Bisaya accent or language use:

TABLE II. Thematic Analysis of Data Gathered for Question 2.

Codes	Themes	Theme Description
Bisaya accent	Bisaya Accent in Tagalog Environment	Participants consistently mention their Bisaya accent when using the Tagalog language. This includes challenges, workplace interactions, and personal experiences associated with how the accent is perceived
Tagalog language		
Discriminating	Workplace	The workplace becomes a

Coworkers	Experiences	notable context where the Bisaya accent is often noticed, leading to jokes. Participants express feelings of being offended at times due to personal nature of some jokes
Offensive Jokes		
Challenging	Challenges and Adaptation	Participants highlight challenges faced, such as difficulty in pronunciation and adapting to the Manila dialect. Some mention using these challenges as motivation to improve language proficiency.
Difficulty in pronouncing words		
Adaptation		
Understanding		
Forgotten translations	Switching Languages	Participants mention a shift to English as a way to avoid the Bisaya accent, suggesting a language switch as a coping mechanism in certain situations.
Switch to English		
Avoiding Bisaya accent	Noticeable Accent	Participants express awareness of the strength of their accent, particularly in pronunciation and speech tone, and how this can lead to others finding it amusing.
Pronunciation		
Speech tone	Language Learning and Unfamiliarity	Some participants talk about the initial challenges they faced when moving to Manila, involving learning the Tagalog language and adapting to the local dialect.
Learning Tagalog		
Unfamiliarity		
Other Local Dialects		

		nuances like language politeness (use of 'po' and 'opo') are noted.
Identity pride	Positive Identity and Pride	Respondents express pride and positivity in their language and cultural identity. This theme emphasizes the unique and positive aspects of being Bisaya.
positive aspects		
Hardworking	Perceptions of Bisaya People	Participants share positive stereotypes or perceptions about Bisaya people, such as being hardworking and determined. This theme is particularly evident in workplace contexts and interactions in Manila.
determined		
caring	Cultural Curiosity and Exchange	The theme of curiosity and a willingness to learn about the Bisayan languages is reflected in instances where others express interest in learning Bisaya words and phrases.
Curiosity		
language learning		
cultural exchange		

Respondents highlight the benefits of enhanced communication, cultural understanding, positive stereotypes, pride, and language exchange, contributing to a sense of belonging and appreciation for their language and heritage.

We can identify the following condensed meaning units, codes, and themes based on the answers given to the question concerning positive or unusual interactions or experiences associated to their Bisayan language and culture in Manila:

TABLE IV. Thematic Analysis of Data Gathered for Question 4.

Codes	Themes	Theme Description
slow down speech	Self-awareness and Speech Modification	Participants highlight the conscious effort to modify their speech, either by slowing down or actively studying to improve language proficiency.
listen to self		
continue studying and reading		
can't control the accent	Accent and Pronunciation Challenges	Participants acknowledge challenges related to accents and pronunciation, emphasizing the difficulty of maintaining control over accents and the humor that may arise from pronunciation differences.
reactions due to differences in pronunciation		
easier to communicate	Interpersonal Communication	Participants stress the importance of effective communication, emphasizing the need for mutual understanding and patience to facilitate smoother interactions.
willing to understand each other		
have more patience		
translate the Bisaya word	Language Retrieval Strategies	Participants share strategies for overcoming language barriers, including translating words from one language to another and describing words when the exact term is forgotten.
describe the word while repeating		

These themes shed light on the methods and techniques that participants believed to be useful in bridging the linguistic and cultural divide between Tagalog and Bisaya speakers. They include self-awareness, cultural and linguistic similarities, mutual language understanding, language learning, adaptation to context, and translation and clarification techniques.

TABLE III. Thematic Analysis of Data Gathered for Question 3.

Codes	Themes	Theme Description
smoother conversation	Language as a Facilitator of Connection	Participants consistently express that using the Bisayan languages enhances communication and connection in various contexts, such as in client interactions, transactions, and workplace relationships.
better understanding		
Trust	Trust and Comfort in Shared Language	Respondents share positive experiences related to trust and comfort when interacting with individuals who speak the same language (Bisaya). This theme is evident in both professional contexts (e.g., client relationships) and personal encounters.
peace of mind		
positive experience	Cultural Similarities and Differences	The discussion of cultural aspects reveals perceptions of similarities and differences between Bisaya and Tagalog speakers. Notably, the absence of significant cultural barriers is highlighted, but
Cultural barriers		
language differences		
superstitions		
politeness		

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer a rich perspective on the effects of regional accent in a different language setting, particularly in the context of Bisayan language speakers living in Manila. A more thorough examination of the findings is given in this discussion section, which also highlights the themes that surfaced and their consequences. Additionally, it addresses the study's limitations and provides recommendations for future research and practical applications.

A. Positive Interactions and Cultural Understanding

The study found that despite linguistic differences, Bisaya and Tagalog speakers in Manila generally have positive interactions and exhibit cultural understanding. This suggests that the residents of this diverse city have developed the ability to communicate effectively and appreciate each other's cultures. Linguistic and cultural barriers can be effectively bridged by mutual respect and civility. This result is consistent with the theory that varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds frequently live peacefully in cosmopolitan regions like Manila, giving rise to cultural pluralism (Appadurai, 1996).

The cultural understanding observed in this study emphasizes the importance of appreciating the diversity within the Philippines. Filipinos come from a rich tapestry of cultures and languages, and acknowledging this diversity can lead to more harmonious coexistence in a multicultural society like Manila. Furthermore, the positive interactions indicate that individuals can find common ground and build relationships that transcend linguistic differences.

B. Challenges and Strategies

The study draws attention to the difficulties Bisayan language speakers in Manila encounter, including language obstacles and accent management. Respondents discussed strategies like self-awareness, language learning, and adaptation to specific contexts. These strategies are essential for enhancing communication and reducing the impact of the Bisaya accent when speaking Tagalog. The importance of mutual language understanding and patience was also emphasized, which aligns with the idea that effective communication often requires effort from both parties, particularly in multilingual settings.

In a diverse linguistic environment like Manila, where various languages and accents coexist, patience and a willingness to understand each other's linguistic nuances are essential for effective communication. Encouraging such understanding can lead to better integration and fewer misunderstandings.

C. Cultural Similarities and Differences

The results showed that speakers of Tagalog and Bisayan share as well as differ culturally. There are variations in pronunciation and customs between the two groups, notwithstanding their mutual respect and courtesy. Understanding these cultural nuances is crucial for effective communication and integration. This is consistent with research on intercultural communication, which highlights the

need of people knowing cultural differences in order to prevent miscommunications and confrontations.

D. Positive Stereotypes and Identity

The positive stereotypes attributed to Visayan individuals, such as being hardworking and determined, contribute to a sense of pride and self-esteem. Positive stereotypes can serve as a source of motivation and identity reinforcement (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). Encouraging a positive self-concept among individuals from linguistic minority groups can boost their confidence and contribute to their successful integration into the larger community. Such positive perceptions can foster a sense of pride in one's linguistic and cultural identity. These findings underscore the impact of stereotypes and identity on individuals' social interactions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

V. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to recognize the limitations of this study. The research primarily focused on the experiences of Bisayan language speakers, and a more comprehensive examination should encompass the perspectives of Tagalog speakers and individuals from other linguistic backgrounds in Manila. Such an approach would provide a more holistic understanding of the linguistic and cultural dynamics in this multicultural setting.

Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias and may not fully capture the breadth of experiences and challenges faced by participants. In order to supplement self-reported data, future research should take into account mixed-method approaches, such as observational and linguistic analyses.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for future research and practical applications:

1. Inclusive Research: Future studies should take a more inclusive approach by exploring the experiences and strategies of Tagalog speakers and individuals from various linguistic backgrounds in Manila and other Tagalog speaking areas. This would provide a more complete understanding of linguistic and cultural interactions.
2. Cross-Cultural Training: Organizations in Manila and Tagalog areas can consider providing cross-cultural and language training to employees, enhancing cultural understanding and effective communication while minimizing potential challenges.
3. Educational Initiatives: Educational institutions can develop language exchange programs and initiatives to promote cultural diversity and language proficiency among students, thereby preparing them for a more inclusive and diverse workforce.
4. Public Awareness: Efforts should be made to increase public awareness about the linguistic and cultural diversity in Manila and other Tagalog areas. Promoting a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of languages and traditions can contribute to a more harmonious society.

The study's findings, taken together, highlight how important it is to comprehend and value language and cultural variety in a heterogeneous setting like Manila. Challenges and positive interactions coexist, emphasizing the importance of

mutual understanding, patience, and respect. By addressing these aspects and considering the recommendations, individuals and organizations in Tagalog speaking areas can promote harmonious interactions among diverse linguistic communities.

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