

Chapter 7

Attitudes toward Language Use and Language Displacement

7.1 Introduction

The data presented in Chapter 4 established that Agusan Manobo is the norm being used in some barangays (e.g. Langgasian and Lydia) but has lost certain domains of use in another barangay (e.g. Sagunto). And there are other barangays who displayed confusion in choosing between Agusan Manobo and Cebuano (e.g. Waloe, Poblacion, and Panagangan). This chapter will investigate the cause of language shift away from Agusan Manobo and attempts to answer the Research Question #2, "What are the attitudes of the Agusan Manobos toward their own language and other languages they speak?" As Giles *et al* (1983:81) stated,

"In most multi-cultural societies, the differential power of particular social groups is reflected in language variation and in attitudes towards these variations. Thus, to have any real understanding of specific language problems we need to study how people react to the language varieties spoken in their locale."

This research is the first known sociolinguistic study of the Agusan Manobo people. It is an attempt to look at the language attitudes of the Agusan Manobo people from a psychological and social point of view. In order for us to know the cause leading to language shift, "we must study what linguistic markers trigger such decisions" (Giles *et al.* 1983:81). To attempt such investigation, a series of open-ended questions were included in the SLQ regarding the opinions of the respondents. This chapter discusses their answers to these questions which serve as a benchmark (1) to determine how the Manobo people consider their native language, i.e. prestigious or low class, and (2) to determine the extent of positive/negative attitudes the Agusan Manobo respondents demonstrate towards language use and language displacement.

Since different barangays displayed different language use patterns, answers of the respondents from "Remote Barangays" where Agusan Manobo is often used (hereafter Remote) was compared to the answers of the respondents from the "Non-Remote Barangays" where Agusan Manobo is rarely used (hereafter Non-Remote).

The open-ended questions deal with three factors: attitudes toward the maintenance of Agusan Manobo; attitudes towards the use of Agusan Manobo; and attitudes towards identity as a Manobo.

7.2 Attitudes towards the maintenance of Agusan Manobo

This section explores the opinions of the respondents toward the use of the Agusan Manobo language among the next generation. The respondents were asked if their children should be able to speak Agusan Manobo and what language they hope their children will speak (Q68, 69, and 70).

Table 52 Summary of answers to Q68 and Q69

Q68 Should your children be able to speak Agusan Manobo?	n =	NA	Yes	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	No
Remote	22	14	21 (95%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
Non-Remote	31	5	25 (81%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	4 (13%)
Q69 Should your children be able to speak Cebuano?	n =	NA	Yes	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	No
Remote	23	13	22 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Non-Remote	29	7	28 (97%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)

As shown in Table 52, answers to Q68 and Q69 did not show a large difference between Remote and Non-Remote barangays. Most of the respondents from both groups answered that it is important for their children (future children for those who are single) to speak Agusan Manobo. Some of reasons given by the respondents are the following:

- Because this is what we are born into and that is our language here
- So that nobody can trick/backstab them.
- So that our tribe will be remembered or not forgotten.
- Because they can use it when they go to another barangay and be accepted
- Because this is our tribe, the tribe of our forefathers
- So that our children can be eligible for the scholarship for IPs [indigenous people groups]

However, 4/31 [13%] of the respondents from Non-Remote stated that their children don't need to speak Agusan Manobo. There reasons for not teaching the native language to their children are as follows:

- It's enough for me that they have Manobo blood.
- Agusan Manobo is not important anymore. It's not important because I will not raise them up here [in Sagunto].
- I don't like hearing Agusan Manobo. It's too noisy. It sounds like they are always shouting at each other.
- I will not teach them Agusan Manobo, I don't like Manobos.

It seems like some respondents are distancing themselves from being identified as one of the Manobos. And in doing so, they decided not to teach Agusan Manobo to their children (or future children).

It is also important to note that the Remote group considered both Manobo 21/22 [95%] and Cebuano 22/23 [96%] equally important languages for their children to learn. This is a classic example of diglossia wherein Agusan Manobo and Cebuano are both used within the community for different purposes in different social situations (domains).

Through the answers to Q68 and Q69, it can be predicted that Agusan Manobo is the language expected to be taught to the next generation in both Remote and Non-Remote areas. Although there is a minority in both groups who reported that their children do not need to learn to speak the Agusan Manobo language. This result can be seen through the answers to Question 70 "Twenty years from now, do you think there will still be children in this village who can speak Agusan Manobo?" As shown in Table 53, 23/29 [80%] of the respondents from Remote areas felt that Agusan Manobo will still be spoken by the future generation while only 13/30 [44%] of the respondents from Non-Remote areas think so, as shown in the table below.

Additionally, 7/30 [23%] of the respondents from Non-Remote areas felt that Agusan Manobo will no longer be spoken by children in the year 2033. Basing on this, it can be noted that the Remote group is more likely to maintain the Manobo language than the Non-Remote group.

Table 53 Summary of answers to Q70

Q70 Twenty years from now, do you think there will still be children in this village who can speak Agusan Manobo?	n =	NA	Yes	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	No
Remote	29	7	23 (80%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)
Non-Remote	30	5	13 (44%)	7 (23%)	3 (10%)	7 (23%)

Some of the negative attitudes given by respondents from the Non-Remote group towards the maintenance of the Manobo language are the following:

- There will be none [no children speaking Agusan Manobo] anymore because it will be replaced by Cebuano.
- There won't be [children speaking Agusan Manobo] because children even insult those who are fluent. They will tease him/her. They will say, "What is his language, it's different/weird".
- Up in the mountains there will still be Manobo speakers but not here anymore.
- Other [Manobo] families don't live here anymore, when they leave this place the language will surely disappear.
- Those children who live here don't even speak Agusan Manobo anymore.
- The older generation will die and their children, after going to Butuan city for university, will only speak Cebuano.
- By that time they won't use Agusan Manobo anymore. They will surely use Cebuano by then.

Questions 68, 69, and 70 measured the specific attitude of the respondents towards the maintenance of the Manobo language.

7.3 Attitudes towards the use of Agusan Manobo

Attitudes towards the use of the Manobo language were measured through two questions: (1) question regarding the traditional use of the Agusan Manobo language (i.e. Q71 “What language is the best for traditional activities, such as funeral, the spirit world, religious beliefs and so forth?”; and (2) question regarding the personal experiences of the respondents with using Agusan Manobo (i.e. Q73 “Have you ever been ashamed to be overheard speaking Agusan Manobo?”

The result regarding attitudes towards the use of Agusan Manobo for certain traditional activities shows a slight difference between the two groups. More than half of the respondents from the Remote places think that the Manobo is the best language for traditional activities while the respondents from the Non-Remote places think Cebuano is the best language for traditional activities. Answers to Q71 are shown in Table 54.

Table 54 Summary of answers to Q71

Q71 What is the best language for traditional activities such as funeral, spirit world, religious belief and so forth?	n =	NA	Manobo	Cebuano
Remote	36	0	24 (67%)	12 (33%)
Non-Remote	36	0	17 (47%)	21 (53%)

When the respondents were asked what they use for funerals, they would say “It depends on who died and the bereaved”. Thus the result summarized in Table 54. But if the respondents were asked what the best language is for “rituals”, they would automatically say Agusan Manobo. Most of the Manobos are converted to Christianity and the church workers use Cebuano for the benefit of those who can’t speak Agusan Manobo in the religious domain. The rituals are seen as ancient Manobo tradition, thus, the respondents automatically declare Manobo as the best language for this certain activity. Some reactions to this question are as follows:

- Agusan Manobo [is the best] because we are Manobos and that is our culture. If only we could read in Agusan Manobo and sing in Agusan Manobo...
- Agusan Manobo because this is the land of the Manobos. The past way of talking to spiritual beings is in Manobo language.
- Agusan Manobo because if the Pastors will use Agusan Manobo to talk about spiritual things, they [the congregation] will really listen to him intently.
- As a native, the native language is the best.
- Most of the people here are Manobos so it should be Agusan Manobo.
- Rituals are always done in Agusan Manobo. It will be ironic if what you're doing is a Manobo tradition and culture but you will use Cebuano.
- The *abyans* 'guardian spirit' will not draw closer to you if you won't use Agusan Manobo. You need to call them out in Agusan Manobo.

Those who chose Cebuano as the best language presented the following explanations:

- So that other people will also understand and so that the Manobos will learn Cebuano.
- For church and funeral, use Cebuano because there are more Cebuanos there.
- Cebuano because most of the people here [in Panagangan] are Cebuanos.
- If you're alone then Manobo. If there are other people, because it's already mixed here [in Poblacion] so Cebuano.

As for the question regarding experiences of speaking the Agusan Manobo language, there is no large difference between the Remote group and the Non-Remote group. Majority of the respondents from both groups confirmed that they have never been ashamed to be overheard speaking Agusan Manobo. This indicates that most of the respondents feel comfortable speaking in their native tongue. The feeling of security is expressed in the following statements:

- No. There is not a time when I was ashamed to use Agusan Manobo because I would still speak it even if there are other people.
- It never happened to me because I would always fight for being a Manobo even if I'm in other places. I am used to speaking Agusan Manobo even if I'm in Gaisano Mall [Butuan City].
- No. Why would you be ashamed? That's our tribe, we should be proud of it.
- We should not be ashamed speaking in Manobo because this is our land. Even the Americans speak Agusan Manobo.
- I'm proud of my language because I'm Manobo. I speak Manobo fluently and I speak it more and more and you don't understand it. But I understand your language (Cebuano). Oh you're nothing because you don't understand my language...Why would I be ashamed? Even if you are educated I beat you because I don't have a degree but I understand you.
- No because they [other language groups] like to listen to Agusan Manobo.
- No. There's no situation like that. Ever since...when I attend seminars, I'm always a representative of the IPs [indigenous people groups]. Yes I'm a Manobo but we are the same. I'm educated. I really never get shy that I'm a Manobo. That is how they will change their views about Manobos.
- When my bestfriend and I were in Butuan for university, we really speak in Agusan Manobo. We were loud like shouting. For us it's nothing because that is how we normally talk.

As shown Table 55 below, 26/29 [90%] of the respondents from the Remote areas and 25/30 [83%] of the respondents from the Non-Remote areas declared that they would not be looked down upon if they use Agusan Manobo.

Table 55 Summary of answers to Q73

Q73 Have you ever been ashamed to be overheard speaking Agusan Manobo?	n =	NA	YES	NO
Remote	29	7	3 (10%)	26 (90%)
Non-Remote	30	6	5 (17%)	25 (83%)

Notice that there are few respondents who felt insecure when they were overheard speaking Agusan Manobo. The situations they were in were:

- Yes because the Manobos are insulted there in Butuan. If you don't wear slippers they will call you Mandaya [another indigenous people group]. They said that Manobos are filthy/dirty/messy.
- Yes. That happened in Patin-ay [Provincial capital] when I was in the hospital because the nurse laughed at me when I speak Agusan Manobo.
- Yes there is...sometimes. When I was in Cabadbaran I was ashamed because they all looked at me.
- Yes, when I was in high school in Butuan City. Because what they think of Manobos at that time [is that] the Manobos are really lower class. So what I did is just use Cebuano all the time.
- There is sometimes especially when they look down upon you. When you go to other places like cities and you talk to someone on the phone in Agusan Manobo and they will hear you, they will laugh at you and mock you.
- Sometimes I notice/hear that there are people insulting me...I felt sad a bit because they laughed at me. I just said, "Lord, forgive them who did not understand."
- Yes in Butuan when they teased us that we are Manobos...when we talk, they say we have loud voices.
- Yes I went to school in Butuan because they thought that Manobos are Muslims so I just stay silent.

7.4 Attitudes towards identity as a Manobo

Two questions were used to measure attitudes towards Manobo ethnicity (i.e. Q74 and Q72). The summary of the results for Q74 is shown in Table 56 below.

Table 56 Summary of answers to Q74

Q74 Do you like being Manobo or you want to be someone else such as a Cebuano or Tagalog?	n =	NA	YES	NO	Indifferent
Remote	20	16	17 (85%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)
Non-Remote	29	7	24 (83%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)

Results to Q74 show that most respondents from both groups, especially the Remote group, are satisfied with their tribe as Manobo. Common answers mentioned by the respondents includes being content of being a Manobo because that is their identity since the moment they opened their eyes.

As for Q72 "Suppose you go to Butuan City and overhear people speaking Agusan Manobo, how would you react?" the common answers of the respondents are as follows:

- I will approach the person and speak to him/her in Agusan Manobo.
- I will be glad/happy/uplifted/encouraged
- I like it.
- The more he/she speaks in Manobo then the more I will talk to him/her.
- We will not speak Cebuano
- I will be proud

Out of the 59 responses for Q72, only 2 [3.4%] respondents from the Non-Remote group revealed a negative response:

- I will be ashamed, I don't know why. People are going to ask me, "Oh so you're a Manobo?" It's embarrassing.
- I will just smile and say in Cebuano, "Kababayan [mate], don't be too obvious here! We're already in the city!"

It seems like that two negative responses shows a sense of embarrassment for the respondents if they will speak Agusan Manobo in the city.

In general, the respondents feel a sense of pride and satisfaction with their ethnicity. But there are instances where some of them are embarrassed with using their native language because of the mockery they experienced from native speakers of the regional language Cebuano.

7.5 Summary of attitudes towards language use and language displacement

In conclusion, the majority of respondents from both groups (Remote and Non-Remote areas) are favourable towards the maintenance of the Manobo language. Results show that Remote areas maintain a classic example of diglossia. Cebuano is used in the community without the need of shifting away from Agusan Manobo because the respondents assign one language in certain domains of use and the assignments are intact and followed. Non-Remote areas displayed signs of shifting from Agusan Manobo to the regional language, Cebuano, but still almost half of the respondents presented positive attitudes towards the maintenance of Agusan Manobo. In addition, both groups hold positive attitudes towards speaking Agusan Manobo. They see this aspect as part of their ethnicity. Certain negative experiences caused other Agusan Manobos to feel embarrassed about their language and culture. Most of Agusan Manobo respondents, however, are satisfied and secured with their ethnic identity.