Counter-Babel: Reframing Linguistic Practices in Multilingual Philippines

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Multlilingualism is the norm in many parts of the world (Grosjean 2010: 13, Thomason 2001: 31), but current linguistic practices remain to be biased towards the perspective of monolingualism. For instance, our current knowledge of language is typically based on the contexts of large-scale, monolingual societies (Adamou 2021: 3–7, Stanford 2016: 525–526, Stanford & Preston 2009: 6–12). Linguistic theories and constructs are largely derived from monolingual language use and processing. Measurements of linguistic skills and proficiencies are mostly based on monolingual competencies. Language documentation practices mainly focus on documenting a single, ancestral code, and much is still left to be done on documenting the language use of multilingual speakers and communities. Finally,

language policies, not just in official domains but also in private ones such as the home, typically concern the use of a single language. In developing linguistic theories, methodologies, and language policies, it is important to consider a broader range of contexts, particularly those from multilingual communities, in that it is in these communities that we can observe a wider variety of linguistic norms, practices, and language use.

Our panel discussion at the 14th Philippine Linguistics Congress, held on 24 to 27 August 2021, explored how to reframe current linguistic practices to better account for the contexts of multilingual communities.[1] As the convenor of the panel, I invited different speakers to talk about their experiences and insights from working with multilingual communities:

- **Jeconiah Dreisbach [JD]**, who has worked on language contact and family language policies in Southern Mindanao;

- **Diane Manzano [DM]**, who is working on language documentation, and has written a grammatical description of Inati in Panay;

- **Vincent Christopher Santiago [VS]**, who is currently working on the grammatical description of Porohanon of Camotes Islands, Cebu;

- **Ruanni Tupas [RT]**, who is specializing in sociolinguistics, and currently working on multilingual virtual interactions, such as concerning Pinoy Pop;

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[1]See UP Department of Linguistics (2021) to access the recording.

- **Louward Allen Zubiri [LZ]**, who is specializing in language documentation and description, and has worked on the languages of the Bicol region and many others; and

- myself, **Maria Kristina Gallego [KG]**, working on language contact in Babuyan Claro and the documentation of Ibatan, the island's local language.

The panel discussed the linguistic diversity of the Philippines, the many faces of multilingualism in the country, the issues and challenges multilingual communities face, and finally, how linguists and researchers in general can reframe their practices in order to address these issues. The following presents a summary of the discussion.

How linguistically diverse is the Philippines?

VS The Philippines is considered a *language hotspot*, which means there is a relatively high level of language endangerment coupled with a high level of linguistic diversity. However, there is also a low level of prior documentation of these languages spoken in this region. According to Blust (1991, 2005, 2019), there are 15 relatively uncontroversial, lower-level subgroups of languages which are considered genetically related under a single proto-language, from the Bashiic or Batanic languages in the north to the Minahasan languages of northern Sulawesi in Indonesia. There are also other non-Philippine languages (meaning, they are not genetically related with Philippine languages) spoken by groups which have migrated into Philippine territory, such

as Inabaknon in Capul Island, and the Sinama languages in and around the Sulu Archipelago, Sabah, and Indonesia around the Celebes Sea. There are Spanish-based creoles in Cavite and Zamboanga. There is also what we call FSL or Filipino Sign Language, with documented regional variations. Finally, we have Filipino as the national language of the country, as well as English, which is declared as an official language, used in commerce, law, and education.

LZ In terms of determining the actual number of languages in the country, which is an ongoing issue in Philippine linguistics and language studies, this concerns the matter of linguistic boundaries. Using mutual intelligibility as one of the criteria in distinguishing boundaries, it can be said that the Philippines is one of the countries in the world with a high linguistic diversity, with each language having more than two dialects. There are languages which are characterized as *L-simplex*, a simple clear-cut system that is located in a specific area and is distinguishable from others around it. However, there are also languages which are characterized as *L-complex* (see Hockett [1958] for a characterization of L-simplex and L-complex), also called *chains* or *continuums*, which are groups of lects or varieties with diminishing degrees of mutual intelligibility among themselves. We also have macrolanguages (see Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2021), introduced in the ISO-639-3 standard, which refer to strongly divergent dialects of the same language or very closely related languages, such as the Bicol languages, also known as the Bicol macrolanguage.

Linguistic diversity is not simply a linguistic issue as there are political and cultural ideologies that are associated with it. For example, while *dialect* is a technical linguistic jargon that refers to a lect or a variety in a specific geographic area, for the layman, the term has negative connotations and can thus be problematic when used as a label. For linguists, high linguistic diversity has repercussions on how we should look at languages and practices of linguistics in the Philippines. This is especially true when thinking about language borders and boundaries. We know that languages do not neatly follow political and administrative boundaries. Terrain affects language diversification and speciation. People's movement also blurs linguistic boundaries and borders. Urban centers and diverse contexts pose problems in this regard. A particularly relevant issue is the Philippines' experience with MTB-MLE or Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, where a single area may have speakers who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It is thus difficult to pinpoint one language to be used as medium of instruction in schools because the students speak different languages and may have different mother tongues.

JD Aside from the complex issue of language boundaries, a high linguistic diversity entails contact and convergence. People from different provinces and regions of the country tend to settle in highly urbanized areas for economic reasons. This creates a linguistic landscape where different languages may come together. Historically speaking, the search for greener pastures has been a common theme in the sociolinguistics of

migration and language contact. Chavacano de Zamboanga is an example of a language which emerged from contact among speakers of Spanish, Tagalog, and other settlers in what we know now as Zamboanga City, Isabela of Basilan, and other places nearby. Philippine Hybrid Hokkien, also known as Lánnang-uè, emerged from the contact between Hokkien migrants from China and the Tagalog speakers of Manila, and now there are other varieties of Lánnang-uè which developed in other regions of the Philippines. This also happened in Southern Mindanao where I come from, where there had been waves of migrants from Luzon and Visayas who settled in Southern Mindanao, specifically the regions of Davao and SOCCSKSARGEN. Currently, some would look at the way we speak in Southern Mindanao as simply code-switching, but across generations, most especially my generation, the mixing of Filipino and Cebuano, or Filipino and Hiligaynon depending on the province, is slowly becoming the mother tongue of some speakers. It is quite interesting from a sociolinguistic perspective as it is akin to the development of the Philippine Spanish-based creoles as well as Philippine Hybrid Hokkien. That is, this Filipino-Cebuano hybrid language may be on its way towards becoming a distinct variety. These contact languages emerged not just from the need to communicate across different ethnolinguistic groups but also from other social motivations such as prestige and self-identity. In these kinds of contexts, it seems that these mixed varieties are considered prestige languages, and this also probably contributes to

Figure 1: A poster showing a mix of Cebuano and Filipino

the inequalities of multilingualism in the areas where these languages are used. In the case of southern Mindanao, as Filipino is the sociolect associated with the economic elite, speaking the Filipino-Cebuano hybrid language became a sort of signifier of who are the privileged (i.e., people who speak more Filipino) and economically disadvantaged (i.e., people who speak Cebuano, Moro, or other indigenous languages).

KG The kind of convergence leading to the emergence of hybrid languages in the context of migration, such as what has been described for Davao Conyo or code-switching between Cebuano and Filipino, is only one of the different contexts

of contact in highly multilingual communities such as the Philippines. Another kind of contact setting is in small-scale communities such as Babuyan Claro, located in the far north of the Philippines. The Ibatan people of Babuyan Claro are of mixed ancestry, descending form Ilocano and Batanic-speaking families. It is in such small-scale communities that concepts such as prestige may not directly apply, in that the kind of multilingualism that exists in the community is egalitarian. However, as small-scale communities become integrated within larger ones, the language ecology will most likely shift, leading to hierarchical multilingualism where the languages of the community become attached with particular social values, thus forming a hierarchical relationship.

RT   From what has been said so far, the challenge is how to capture these different aspects of multilingualism in different communities. Coming from my experience working on online data, another layer to add to the discussion is in terms of multi-modalities. Different modalities overlap, which has an implication on the people's use of different languages. The point I want to drive is that when we look at multilingualism online, we deal with a different layer of questions about how we should approach multilingualism. That is, it is difficult to talk about multilingualism as simply the coming together of different languages and linguistic practices. Rather, what seems to be more appropriate in capturing how young Filipinos communicate with each other online is through communicative repertoires, which concern language use in specific functions

and contexts. For example, Twitter has Spaces, which involves oral communication, and at the same time, it also has the traditional tweets, which involve written communication. So in understanding online communication in fandoms such as those on Pinoy pop groups, like SB19 and Alamat, what is more interesting to capture is how the people actually communicate and how communication becomes meaningful, instead of simply teasing out the different languages people use in communication.

KG   That's true. The traditional approaches towards multilingualism involving teasing apart languages and measuring the person's linguistic abilities in each language come from the pre-existing bias in the field towards monolingualism. In actuality, when we talk about linguistic competence, this goes beyond proficiencies in particular linguistic domains such as reading, writing, and speaking, but it also relates to the person's awareness of the different contexts in which they use their different languages. For example, they know which context would call for mixing languages, and which context would call for keeping the boundaries of their languages separate. These are also some of the things we need to think about when we approach multilingualism, both offline and online.

DM   Another issue relevant to multilingualism and language diversity is language endangerment. This is particularly salient among the Inati speakers of Panay. Because languages are used in different domains in the community, we can observe language

attrition and shift among speakers. That is, most speakers tend to use the more dominant and economically beneficial language not only to accommodate to their neighbors but also to gain opportunities not available in their heritage language. This can lead to language shift, which is a long process of speakers preferring to use the language that would give them better opportunities, that is, the language of the center. Speakers experience language attrition when they move out of their communities because they use the dominant or prestige language most of the time (i.e., in their work, in their immediate community, and sometimes in their home). So, their heritage language would be restricted to the home and they tend to use the larger language(s) in other domains. While that can be regarded as part of the person's sociolinguistic competence in a multilingual setting, the problem with it is that the heritage language of the speakers is not used in domains where knowledge can be improved or where knowledge in that language can be used that well. According to Brandone et al. (2006), the single most important factor contributing to the development of language is input, and thus, children acquire the language spoken to them by their primary caregivers. In the context of multilingual communities, speakers tend to receive only minimal input in their heritage language as it is only used in very limited domains. This thus restricts the growth of the language as it is not used in wider domains where it can further develop. This is how language endangerment arises. It does not simply happen because your parents chose to use a

different language when talking to you. We cannot just blame the parents for choosing to stop using their language. Language shift and endangerment are the results of a long process that involve a multitude of factors that go beyond language.

What does everyday multilingual communication in your respective communities look like?

LZ   I am a Bicolano from Daet, Camarines Norte. I cannot speak for all Bicolanos as Bicolanos navigate their communicative repertoires differently, but from what I have observed growing up, accommodation among Bicolanos and other residents in the peninsula is apparent. For example, when I have classmates from Buhi who speak Boinen, they will probably talk to another person from Buhi in Boinen, but they will shift to Bicol Rinconada when they talk to someone from Nabua or Baao or Iriga, and they shift to Bicol Naga when they talk to someone from Central Camarines Sur. However, when we talk to someone from Virac or Pandan in Catanduanes, we use Tagalog. This is because, as I have mentioned earlier, Bicol languages are treated as macrolanguages where there are varying degrees of mutual intelligibility among the varieties, so speakers use the language of wider communication. In this case, Tagalog is the preferred choice because the Bicol varieties are not mutually intelligible. This is also true in reverse. That is, people from other places in Bicol tend to use Tagalog when

speaking with someone from Camarines Norte, even if it is only the western side of Camarines Norte that is actually Tagalog-dominant. For us on the eastern side of the province, we have a particular variety called Bicol Daet that has different features from Bicol Naga. The middle of Camarines Norte is more complicated, as that is where contact between Bicol and Tagalog speakers happens. There are also other non-Bicol languages in the Bicol peninsula, such as Manide in Camarines Norte, Iriga and Inagta Isarog in Camarines Sur, and Inagta Sorsogon in Sorsogon. In sum, we see cases of accommodation occurring among Bicolanos as they always navigate their linguistic repertoires based on when, where, and with whom they use their languages.

KG As what has been said about linguistic competence, people are clearly aware of when and where they use their different languages. Related to this, are people aware of the boundaries between these lects?

LZ I think in the Philippines, some people have high linguistic awareness, reflected in how they would comment that people from a certain place speak a certain "accent," or pronounce a word in a certain way. As for Bicolanos, they are generally very aware of where the intelligibility begins and ends among the Bicol varieties. Coming from my experience as a native of Camarines Norte, other Bicolanos know that we are part of the Bicol region but at the same time, they also think that we

are not Bicolano enough, so, as what I have already said, they typically choose Tagalog when they talk to us.

VS   I'll be talking about the linguistic experience of the Porohanon people. This is largely based on previous studies, namely Zorc (1977), Wolff (1967), and Tawil (2009). Additionally, personal insights derive from a brief field trip I did in Poro in 2018. The island of Poro is part of the Camotes Islands, and the municipality of Poro is on the northwestern side of the island. One of the shibboleths or distinguishing features of Porohanon, which is the variety spoken primarily in the municipality of Poro, is the sound [z], which in Cebuano Bisaya corresponds to the glide [j] when it occurs before a vowel. For example, the word *dazon* 'to go, to continue' in Porohanon, as in "Dazon kamo sa Buho Rock" 'Let's go to Buho Rock' would be *dayon* or *padayon* in other Bisayan varieties. So, when I first came to Poro with this knowledge from previous research, that is, the people are bilingual in Cebuano and would speak Porohanon in certain domains, I was disappointed because I did not immediately hear the marked feature [z] used by the speakers. When I went out to buy something at the shops, I would hear them talking in Cebuano Bisaya and I was surprised not to hear [z] in their speech. Eventually, when I joined their festivities, and when I talked to some of the representatives of the community at the local government unit as well as some of my consultants, I was then able to hear some distinguishing features of Porohanon. Aside from the sound [z], there are also case markers or particles that precede nouns, such as Porohanon *an* that corresponds

Figure 2: A poster in the Porohanon language

to Cebuano *ang*. Additionally, in pronouns, instead of the standard *natoʔ* 'our' with the glottal stop [ʔ] at the end, the Porohanons would say *naton* or *aton*. Aside from this, they have the existential word *ara*, which corresponds to Cebuano *aduna* or *naa*. There are many other features that distinguish Porohanon from Cebuano, even though Poro is administratively part of the province of Cebu.

DM I'll be discussing the context of Inati based on my fieldwork in the community. Inati is a Negrito language of Panay, which is mostly spoken in Aklan, Iloilo, and some parts of Negros. I went to the Inati communities of Numancia and Boracay. While in both communities, Inati is used at home and in the wider community, the contexts of language use in Numancia and Boracay differ significantly. In Numancia, Aklan, the community is located in the city, but Boracay is a separate

island and it is a famous tourist spot. In Boracay, there is a need for the Inati people to learn English because they need to accommodate to the tourists. So, you have a linguistic capital if you know how to speak English, which is why many of the Inati in Boracay prefer to learn English as they can get good jobs. To compare with the context of the Inati in Numancia, Aklan, they prefer the use of Akeanon[2] because their neighbors are mostly Akeanon speakers. The jobs they get in the city center would also typically require them to use Akeanon. In Numancia, aside from the need to learn Akeanon, the Inati also need to learn Hiligaynon, which is the lingua franca of Panay. Hiligaynon is also used in the church, so when the Inati go to Christian churches, the language used in religious activities is Hiligaynon. At school, moreover, they use Akeanon, but there are also some classes taught in Filipino, the national lingua franca, and English, which is an official language in the Philippines and is an international lingua franca. Thus, looking at the context of Inati in Aklan, there are different languages in different domains that they need to learn. This is where we see their sociolinguistic competence because they know when to adjust and accommodate to the language of a particular person. However, the language ecology in Aklan also affects the vitality of Inati. The first thing that Nanay Lily, one of my consultants, shared to me was how she wants her children to learn Inati so that they know how to speak their heritage language. However,

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[2]Akeanon and Aklanon are both used to refer to the language and the people, however, Akeanon appears to be an endonym.

she lamented that Inati would not be beneficial to her children when it comes to schooling or when they start looking for jobs. Her firstborn, Maricon, learned Inati as a child, but as Maricon spent most of her time in the city growing up, she started forgetting her language. During our elicitation sessions, Maricon would at times forget a word in Inati, and would have to ask her mother for help. So that is where I saw language attrition happening because Inati is no longer used in all domains of community life. That is, if a language is not used in a particular domain such as in education, linguistic knowledge in that domain also tends to be lost.

KG   This exactly shows how language endangerment is part of a larger social process. You cannot just blame the parents for not passing on their language to their children, as they do not live in a bubble and instead participate in society where other factors come into play. As long as these social issues prevail, we cannot fix the problem of language endangerment so easily.

JD   In the context of multilingual southern Mindanao, particularly in areas predominantly populated by Cebuano settlers, language use is an outcome of a history of migration that started during the American colonization and the post-war era. There had been a large migration of settler-colonists from Luzon and the Visayas to "develop" areas in southern Mindanao that were, at that time, primarily inhabited by Moros and other indigenous peoples. As a caveat, I use the term *settler-colonists* to refer to the Luzon and Visayas migrants to Southern Mindanao. While the term *settler*

is commonly used in the literature, the settler-colonists displaced the Moros and other indigenous peoples, which then affects the language ecology of the area. The term *settler-colonists* highlights the inequalities of multilingualism and the social injustices that are observable today.

We can regard southern Mindanao, specifically Davao and the SOCCSKSARGEN regions, as a microcosm of the Philippines. The languages predominantly spoken depending on the settlement are Cebuano, Hiligaynon, and Filipino. Despite the ethnic Tagalogs being a minority in our area, Filipino is regarded as the language of prestige because it is used by the economic elite who are tied to the elites in the capital city Manila. There are also significant communities of Ilokanos and Kapampangans in Mindanao, and there are speakers of Capiznon residing in Sultan Kudarat. It is also common for my generation to use hybrid Filipino-Cebuano or Filipino-Hiligaynon. Imagine how it is typical to hear Filipino, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, and English being used along a five hundred-meter street on a daily basis. Thus, the people are exposed to a minimum of four languages in everyday communication.

RT I would like to first comment on what DM shared. As an Akeanon, I see how accurate her description is. The others have already talked about the inequalities of multilingualism, not just in terms of the distribution of the different languages but also in terms of their hierarchical relationships. This somehow impacts language choice. I remember growing up with the idea

that Hiligaynon is a more powerful language than Akeanon and other languages spoken in the area. There is also some sort of awareness of the different domains where we use these languages. However, when we look at online language use, different linguistic ideologies surface. For example, we see how multiple languages or varieties are being used simultaneously. Some people may simply don't care as much about their grammar as others. Of course, you would also have some people who use language as a way to create borders when arguing with others. That is, instead of engaging with the arguments, they counter with comments such as "pangit yung English mo" 'your English is bad,' or "bakit ganyan yung Tagalog mo?" 'why is your Tagalog like that?' So, the kinds of bordering involved in online language use is more ideological than traditional linguistic practice. Nevertheless, borders are very mobile and fluid when it comes to online linguistic practices, so what we really see happening as far as these practices are concerned are changing structures of interaction and the making of communicative repertoires. To give you a snippet of what is happening, which I've already described in some newspaper articles (cf. Tupas 2020), I'll talk about SB19, a Pinoy pop group. One of its members, Ken Suson (or Felip), is a Bisaya, and sometimes he would post a screenshot of some of his conversations in Bisaya,[3] for example, with his dad. Of course, we know that even then, in such a huge fandom, Bisaya is a marked language, with Tagalog or English

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[3]Specifically Cebuano Bisaya.

as the unmarked choice. So, in his posts, there would be many different responses. First, Bisaya fans would come together and translate his post. Another kind of response would be from those who don't understand Bisaya, where they would ask others for help so that they can understand the text. Some of them would go out of their way and consult their friends who know Bisaya to help them translate what these conversations mean. Another fascinating thing that can be observed in such contexts is that people who speak other Philippine languages would start trying to make connections between Bisaya and their languages, such as Akeanon and Hiligaynon, which are closely related languages. That is, even if they do not fully understand Bisaya, they can partially make sense of the text based on the similarities shared between the languages. However, there are also added layers to this as there are particular words or expressions that differ among the dialects and varieties. So, there would be discussions among the fandom like how the translations are inaccurate, depending on the variety used. The point I want to make is that online language use involving overlapping communicative repertoires do not seem to bother language users, and rather, it is something they pick up as a way to get to the meaning they want to convey. Of course, this is because there is a desire from all parties to come together and co-construct meaning. But as I mentioned earlier, there are also exclusionary practices, and we find them when users begin to differentiate themselves from others based on their languages, dialects, and accents. In the context of education,

overlapping use is frowned upon and treated as problematic. That is, there is the need to keep the boundaries of the languages separate. However, online, if users don't understand a text, the meaning becomes clear to them because of the negotiations that arise, and in the end, users get around the problem of linguistic differences. Their approach in these contexts is to be inclusive and open to different overlapping linguistic practices where more communication takes place, rather than policing language use that creates boundaries and somehow prevents the facilitation of communication which is a very common ideology in contexts such as education.

DM Just to add to that, I want to highlight the problem of assessing the linguistic competence of multilinguals. When people use different languages, they can somehow adjust even if they don't understand the whole thing. Because we tend to assess competence based on monolingual standards, the speakers are then characterized as having incomplete competence in one or more of their languages. This reflects the inequality between monolingual and multilingual speakers. There is thus the need to change how we assess multilingual competencies.

KG This is what I mentioned earlier about the problems of assessing linguistic competence and skills. Using monolingual standards can be problematic because we know that language processing mechanisms are different between monolinguals and multilinguals. This is but one of the many issues and challenges that confront multilingualism.

What are the challenges multilingual communities face in the Philippines?

RT   In terms of education, there seems to be a gap between actual language use (i.e., in domains outside the school) and the language used in schooling. For education to be as meaningful as possible to our kids, this gap needs to be bridged. However, there is the assumption that what is happening outside the school is looked down upon and devalued. How then do you bridge that gap? As academics, one way is to bring our experiences and knowledge into the classroom. Personally, I try to introduce the idea of *translingual disposition*, or how everyone needs to be open and accepting of the cultural and linguistic practices that students bring along with them into the classroom and, if we are able to, further use them as resources for teaching. This is vastly different from the common assumption that these cultural and linguistic practices are dangerous to learning, wherein these linguistic and cultural repertoires do not seem to align with what the state wants for the students. Research has shown again and again the opposite, and that the learners' experiences are actually fundamental to pedagogy. You start where your students are. And so, when you start with what they have and what they know and use those as resources for teaching, it can actually help facilitate whatever it is that you are teaching. For instance, in my area of research, we can use the cultural and linguistic resources of the students to facilitate more effective teaching of English. How much more in the

context of other subjects in education such as science and mathematics?

So to sum up, for me, one of the key problems in education is how to bridge the knowledge gap between the classroom and what is happening out there, both online and offline. We need to draw from the communities from which our students cooperate to mobilize their own languages and encourage the learners to bring their experiences into the classroom to be used as effective pedagogical resources.

JD   What I want to add to the discussion is the conflict between family language policies and national language education policies. I am mainly coming from the context of southern Mindanao where we can observe intense contact across multilingual communities. If I'm not mistaken, the design of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Program implemented by the Philippine government best caters to student populations in areas where the dominant language is the students' mother tongue, as in Luzon and Visayas where Ilocano, Bicolano, Cebuano, and Hiligaynon are spoken. In these areas, *translanguaging*, or the use of multiple languages in certain communicative contexts, is possible between the mother tongue and English, or the mother tongue and Filipino.

However, the context of southern Mindanao makes implementing the policy difficult. Using educational materials written in Cebuano Bisaya, for example, would be confusing for students in southern Mindanao because the

variety we speak is different. The parents also have a hard time in understanding the text, more so in teaching their children, as they also do not use the Cebuano Bisaya variety. They want educational materials that are applicable in their context, using a language they can understand, so that they can effectively teach the lessons to their children. Moreover, from my conversations with teachers, they also want to develop such educational materials, but funding is scarce. That is one conflict that arises from national education language policies.

As for family language policies, Filipino is considered as a prestige language in southern Mindanao. If you belong to the middle to upper class and you send your kids to private school, the language choice would be Filipino. Speaking from personal experience, I was exposed to an environment with a predominantly Cebuano population, but I am more comfortable in using Filipino and English as compared to Cebuano. So, there is an apparent disconnect with the language spoken by the majority of the population. At school, one parent told me that Bisaya is already spoken by many, so it is given that their children would eventually learn it on their own, and that is why their focus is teaching Filipino and English at home. There is also discrimination against being Bisaya or speaking the Bisayan language. If you pronounce a word with a certain accent, the kids would laugh at you. Another layer to add to this is the experience of the Moros and other indigenous groups in Mindanao, who also have to adjust to the dominant language of the community in addition to their own mother tongues

and home settings. For the Maranao, Maguindanao, Blaan, and Manobo, among others, they also have to learn Cebuano Bisaya, Hiligaynon, Filipino, and English. For them to be able to do business or to find work, they also have to adjust and speak the dominant language. As DM already mentioned, this may lead to language attrition in their heritage language which is linked to their culture and identity. Their own languages are minoritized within their own ancestral lands, which is one of the many social and linguistic injustices they face.

What are the different challenges that researchers of language encounter when working with multilingual communities?

LZ I'll be talking about four different areas of research, namely language mapping and visualization, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and Indigenous Peoples Education Program (IPED), assessments of vitality and intergenerational transmission, and language documentation.

For language mapping such as lexical and ethnological mapping, even if it is easy to present and digest information through such visualizations, these approaches typically give an oversimplified picture of the situation in a specific area. So going back to the discussion on language borders and boundaries, in reality, it is difficult to portray a good representation of the linguistic situation in an area if you are using traditional

dialectological methods. This is what I encountered when I did several dialectological works. Fortunately, there are emerging methodologies in mapping that use a different approach, such as visualizing the percentage of language users in an area, as well as other non-linear and non-monolithic representations (see Anderbeck 2008 for a Malaysian example; Teerarojanarat & Tingsabadh 2012 for a Thai example, and Wheeler 2005 for MDS).

Regarding multilingual and indigenous education, there were several conferences that discussed the implementation of MTB-MLE in the Philippines. However, people eventually realized that they need to approach the policy from the context of their own community. In the case of Bicol, developing a single orthography for the different Bicol varieties would be problematic because of the differences across the varieties. In terms of materials development, the same problem applies, where you cannot directly use materials developed for Bicol Naga for other regions such as Catanduanes, Sorsogon, or Camarines Norte. There is thus the need to develop contextualized and localized materials across the different provinces.

With respect to language vitality assessments, these are typically approached through measuring the degree of intergenerational transmission, which is done by assessing language skills of individuals, such as production and comprehension. However, how do we assess the linguistic abilities of a multilingual if most

of what we know of tests of production and comprehension are based on monolingual speakers? How can you say a person is a speaker of a particular language? Do we even have the right assessment tools for multilingual speakers and do we have the right tools for the context of the Philippines?

Finally, when it comes to language documentation, we have to deal with how we represent a documentary record of these languages. In the case of Bicol, because there are other Philippine languages at the lower end of the vitality scale, documenting the Bicol varieties is not a high priority for linguists. However, it is still necessary to come up with a way to build a Bicol corpus that is representative of the diversity of Bicol languages. This means going beyond Bicol Naga and including other Bicol varieties. Moreover, there are also non-Bicol languages in the Bicol peninsula, such as Manide, Iriga, Agta, and Isarog Agta, which are scarcely documented and described. So, we also need to find ways to incorporate these in our documentation efforts.

VS I agree with what LZ has said, particularly on how maps and other such visualizations can be loaded because they come from a particular set of valuations for the data. That is, they represent a certain way of looking at data. For Porohanon, Wolff (1967) was the first to put the language in the limelight through his map showing discrete lines and boundaries where Porohanon was mainly spoken. He indicated which areas of the Camotes Islands have speakers of Porohanon along with a Cebuano

majority, as well as areas with a Porohanon majority and a Cebuano minority. So, the map shows such kinds of gradients and scaling, which in reality may not be so discrete.

Regarding research activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult for us to continue our language documentation projects because we cannot go to the community at the moment. Without doing fieldwork, how can I observe the dynamics and the constant negotiation among speakers of Porohanon, and the point in which they shift to more Cebuano-like speech patterns? There are also Waray speakers in Camotes islands, which adds a further layer to the language ecology. And so, how do I observe these interactions in an online or remote setup, and without seeing the speakers in their own community using these varieties in their everyday dealings? These are what I see as challenges in my research now.

DM To add to what LZ and VS said about mapping, it is also a challenge for me, particularly on the dialectology of Inati. It is difficult to reconcile what I currently observe among the Inati dialects and those that have been documented in the past because of the changing landscape of the Inati communities. There are various dialects of the language, such as Inati, which is what is commonly known by outsiders, and Inete, which is what people call themselves and their language. There is also what they call Inata, spoken in Negros, which others describe as similar to Ati, but others would label as a totally different language. As what

LZ said, there is a need for proper assessment of the varieties in order to establish their relationship.

Another point to raise is choosing your language consultants. Traditionally, we were taught to look for old, male, monolinguals who are highly proficient in the language you are documenting. However, you see the vitality of the language if it is used by the younger generations. For Inati, Pennoyer (1985) described the variety spoken in Iloilo, and we can compare its difference with the variety spoken in Aklan. In Aklan, the Inatis use *ang* 'nominative marker' whereas they don't use the form in Iloilo. So in documenting Inati, I had to wrestle with the fact that the language changes across generations. The variety of language consultants in terms of age and other social factors would, therefore, give us a good picture of linguistic ecology and landscape of the language being studied.

Lastly, I want to highlight the research fatigue experienced by most of my language consultants. As researchers, you have to know when the speakers need to take a break or when to stop the data elicitation. Aside from this, there are communities in the Philippines that have experienced research fatigue on a larger scale. They would comment, "pagod na pagod na kami, ang dami niyong tanong pero wala namang bumabalik sa komunidad namin" 'we are exhausted, you ask a lot of questions but nothing ever returns to our community.'

KG That is a very common story for many communities in the Philippines where the people feel that the researchers are stealing

their knowledge from them. I think that the challenges and issues surrounding multilingualism continue to persist because we have been imprisoned by the colonial practices that we grew up with not just as linguists and academics but also as speakers within these communities. The key to describing and more accurately accounting for multilingual contexts is having a good understanding of the particular context of the community you are working with. In this way, you can come up with a good measurement of the language skills of the speakers or a good visualization of the linguistic landscape of the community through maps, to cite a few examples.

How do we reframe our current linguistic practices to better account for multilingual communities?

LZ I will start by repeating what KG said about how our current practices have been anchored on colonial ideologies and practices. Before we start reframing and changing our mainstream practices and ideologies, we first need to acknowledge that there is a problem. When doing fieldwork, you should treat people as people and not as a static data mine that you just elicit words and sentences from. If you treat them as people, you don't box them into specific categories and expectations, like they have to speak, look, and act a certain way. You see them as they live, as they interact with people in their community. You will then be able to see more clearly the

nuances in how they use their languages, how they change the way they talk when they are with certain people. Therefore, we have to take an approach that is more people-centric rather than data-centric. The same goes with map-making, which is a practice with colonial roots (for more discussions, see Bellone et al. 2020, Lucchesi 2020). Presently, there is an emerging framework called *counter-mapping*, which is more participatory, and it moves away from cartography itself and focuses on the agency of the people to decide for themselves which places have specific names and significance. In Hawai'i, issues on land, on *'āina*, are very important. That is a very sensitive topic, and you always have to be conscious about where you are, in what community you find yourself in, what your 'āina is, because your responsibilities are always anchored on what you regard as your 'āina.

In terms of language description, while we know that there is no such thing as a "pure language," the problem is that in practice we were trained to look for that in the languages we are working on. That is, we collect "pure" lexical and grammatical data and filter out what must have developed from the influence of other languages. We also typically just work with a single speaker who is known to be highly proficient in their language, assuming that they are representative of the group, and under the idea that the variety they speak is a "static" version of the language. However, we should move away from this static, monolithic view and focus on the people's communicative practices and language use. Emerging frameworks for language

documentation considers a wider range of language users, as well as a wider range of communicative repertoires or practices. Doing so allows you to see how the individual navigates their linguistic repertoire, that is, how they use their different languages and dialects in different contexts. In annotating your data, for example on ELAN [EUDICO Linguistic Annotator], you just use additional tiers to include other languages, dialects, or registers. Thus, you are able to capture a more holistic repertoire of the language user. We want our documentary record to reflect the full domains and contexts in which the person uses the languages in their repertoire. In contrast, we do not want our documentary record to be restricted to "idealized" languages that no one in the community actually uses.

Similarly, regarding revitalization, our efforts should not be romanticized and be based on the idea of a "pure" version of the language. We have to accept that languages change. Particularly in multilingual communities, we also expect to find contact-induced changes in the languages. That is the reality of speakers, they are multilingual, and this affects not only the structure of the languages but also how the people use their languages. So you first have to start from the perspective that the people are multilingual, and how you promote language maintenance or revitalization in your language work is a matter of community and collaborative input rather than purely a problem of acquisition.

Finally, do we have spaces supporting multilingual practices and multilingual users? If we don't, then it is futile to simply reframe our practices. Thus, we should actively create spaces for multilingual users, and reframing our linguistic practices would follow. Multilingual spaces do not simply acknowledge multilingualism but rather, these spaces affirm multilinguals and encourage language users to use the totality of their linguistic repertoires and communicative practices.

VS I will start with my personal reflection on my research. I think I wasted so much time and so many brain cells thinking about the question, "is Porohanon a language, a dialect, or none of the above?" But coming from our discussion, particularly what RT said about teasing languages apart, maybe it's better to move the discussion forward. What if I just think of Porohonon as how the people regard it, and that's enough. And as what the others have said, I started to think of language documentation as capturing a snapshot of how dynamic and varied the linguistic practices and the repertoires of the people of Municipality of Poro are, and how the people use their languages, varieties, and dialects.

DM What I want to share is what I plan to do next in my research. I realized that I don't need to fit my consultants into boxes, wherein I expect them to be using a certain kind of Inati. The community should be allowed to use their languages in the domains they use them. You should not force them to use pure Inati just because it needs to be revitalized or that it needs to be preserved, because that is your agenda as a researcher. You

have to realize that your agenda may not be the agenda of the community.

Another practice that we need to reframe is on assessment of linguistic skills. This applies not just in choosing your language consultants, but also in assessing the linguistic competence of children, which is commonly measured against the skills of native speakers of English, Filipino, Hiligaynon, or Akeanon. It is difficult for the children because they need to catch up on formally learning four languages in order to measure up to monolingual standards. For MTB-MLE, we come from the idea that we start from where the learners are. Therefore, we should also change the way we assess children in terms of competencies in their languages. As what has been pointed out earlier, our assessments should be able to account the context of multilingual speakers, and should not be measured based on monolingual standards.

KG   Adding to what DM has said earlier about our role as linguists in the field, we come to the community wearing a particular hat, carrying our own agenda, and because we carry the bias of the colonial practices we grew up in, we oftentimes put less value on how people actually use their languages and put premium on documenting the idealized version of their language, of documenting a single, ancestral code for the community. What is changing now is how our discipline is starting to acknowledge and actually put more value on the input and insights of speakers and members of the community

regarding their languages. So, the key is to form a collaborative, community-centered approach in our research.

RT   One thing that has been highlighted from today's discussion is making the language users as the unit of analysis. From my context as a sociolinguist, one way to move forward is by decentering language and language studies. That is, when we go to the communities, we do not prioritize teasing apart the languages, but we begin by trying to understand how people live their lives, to capture the everyday rhythm of the community. It is through it that we understand not simply which languages they use but the totality of their everyday lives as well. That is, we are able to see where the people's languages are placed in their everyday lives. For example, even if we come from different fields of language studies, we somehow train our lenses on language and language use. However, I think the question is that in different contexts, while certain groups of people put language in the center of their everyday lives, in many cases, the concerns of the communities are even more basic. And I think when we look at it that way, we are dealing with translingual practices, with the focus on understanding people's communicative repertoires. I remember the brilliant UNESCO-awarded work of Ma. Luisa Doronila and her team here (cf. Canieso-Doronila 1996). Amidst problems concerning language and literacy, problems on hunger and livelihood are more fundamental to the people. What indeed is the point of knowing particular languages, of knowing how to read and write, if it cannot feed them? Our descriptions of how people

and communities communicate must go hand-in-hand with the conditions within which they use language. We tease out languages or we describe new formations of language use, but in what contexts do these things happen? Thus, in knowing the everyday rhythm of the lives of people, we actually see how some linguistic practices are more equal than others and how some multilingual practices are more privileged than others. So, even if we surface the multilinguality of the practices of communities, some would certainly surface as a more privileged kind of multilingualism than others. Thus, we are also able to see that linguistic practices are not mobilized on an equal playing field. So, while we celebrate emerging communicative repertoires or are excited about new lenses we are using to study language use, we need to ask who's producing these linguistic and communicative practices, and under what conditions.

Canieso-Doronila (1996) reframed the idea of looking at literacy in the context of community development. That is, when you go to the community, you don't start with pushing for the development of a particular language policy you already have in mind. Rather, you work with the people, the communities, engage with different stakeholders, for example politicians and educators and the ones involved with the community. And when you actually start putting all of these together, you understand better what the community needs in terms of literacy. For example, in contexts where functional, basic literacies are needed, the local languages are most important. This contrasts with the national language policy that tells you to

use a particular language. It starts from the ground up, but it is also forward-looking in the sense that it is inclusive of different languages. Therefore, you can see how these different languages come into play not against each other but together. If you have a much more robust approach that brings research and community development together, you are able to really see the needs of the community.

JD I agree with what RT discussed on the critical sociolinguistics of language policies. What I want to add to this is regarding family language policies, which should be included in the discourses of national educational policies. From a language development perspective, the children's primary language input would come from the immediate environment, typically their parents and families. I also agree with the approach of making the user as the unit of analysis. For multilingual families, the variety of home languages could differ from institutional languages generally implemented through national educational policies (Hollebeke, Struys & Agirdag 2020: 1–2). Taking the basic units of society (i.e., the individual and the family) in consideration grounds national educational and language policies on the actual needs and contexts of the community. This also potentially makes it more inclusive to emerging language varieties. Focusing on the contact situation in southern Mindanao, there is a need to come up with learning materials that are applicable to the linguistic landscape and language ecology of the learners.

The points raised in the panel discussion highlighted how multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. However, the sociolinguistic settings that underpin many multilingual communities, especially small-scale ones, are very fragile. That is, it is such kinds of setting that tends to be endangered more rapidly than the languages themselves (Childs, Good & Mitchell 2014: 172). As researchers who closely work with the communities, we have a significant role to play in that we can affect the people's perceptions and ideologies regarding their languages, and we are also in a better position to actively advocate for their welfare. At the same time, we have to acknowledge the injuries academia has inflicted on the communities and move towards adopting more inclusive and collaborative frameworks for our discipline.

Reframing language practices is the first step in decolonizing linguistics. We have been dependent on theories in frameworks and definitions crafted from monolingual communities that speak of their realities. It is time to redefine the discipline, come up with approaches and practices that are anchored and are reflective of our identities and our voices, and eventually develop a theory of language based on our collective experiences.

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