

Diving into the Language: An Ethnolinguistic Study of Bontocanon Fisherfolk in Southern Leyte

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ABSTRACT : This study aims to describe the language of the Bontocanon fishermen based on: (a) words, (b) usage, and (c) meaning. Register refers to language used within a specific domain with distinct meaning; it is a language variation related to the speaker or user, commonly observed within specific disciplines. This research utilizes ethnolinguistic, discourse, and content analysis to examine and interpret the collected words. Participants in this study are ten (10) selected fishermen residing in Brgy. Poblacion, Bontoc, Southern Leyte, chosen through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through interviews. Findings reveal that the language of Bontocanon fishermen is an ethnolinguistic language reflecting the livelihood and culture of fishermen. The fishermen's language can only be defined and described in relation to their culture, traditions, tools, location, and livelihood in fishing. The researchers suggest expanding this study, developing a comprehensive collection or glossary, and using it as a supplementary teaching resource.

KEYWORDS - *Bontocanon; ethnolinguistics; fishermen; register, language*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is imperative to study the language of fishermen, as Southern Leyte is a province that is home to many fishing communities. Fishing is one of the primary livelihoods of Southern Leyteños due to the province's coastal location (SouthernLeyte.gov.ph, n.d.). In 2007, fish production reached 4,305.62 tons, amounting to 694.2 million pesos in value. According to PSA (2021), Southern Leyte contributed to more than a 10 percent increase in fish production in Eastern Visayas during the second quarter of 2021, with an 8.55% fishery production. Among these fishermen are the Bontocanon, who are residents of Bontoc, Southern Leyte. This study aims to describe their language in terms of vocabulary, usage, and meaning.

The word "tú.nga" is one of the distinctive terms from the language of Bontocanon fishermen, referring to the appearance or clustering of fish on the surface of the sea. It serves as a signal to fishermen that fish are present in a particular area. This study focuses on the linguistic register of Bontocanon fishermen. "Bontocanon" refers to the residents of Bontoc, Southern Leyte.

According to Silawan and Borong (2022), register is a type of language variety. Language variety refers to unique features associated with particular socio-situational contexts that help identify specific variations or language varieties, one of which is register. Register is a variety linked to the social role played by the speaker at the time of expression. According to Heramiz (n.d.), register is language used in a specific domain with defined meanings, a variation of language related to the speaker or user, often used in specific disciplines. Its meaning can only be determined within its field of use, which is referred to as the linguistic register (Elcomblus, 2022).

It is essential to understand the language of fishermen for effective communication between speaker and listener, especially since these terms are uncommon and used primarily by fishermen. Francisco (2020) stated that studying language variety is significant as it aids in the modernization and intellectualization of the Filipino language, enriching its lexicon in various fields. It is also important for people to identify the language according to the field it is used in to avoid misinterpretation and to facilitate understanding.

This study also relates to the concept of ambagan. Ambagan is a project by the Filipinas Institute of FIT that highlights words or vocabulary commonly used or of importance within particular groups. According to Dr. Galileo S. Zafra, "by incorporating contributed words from other languages in the Philippines, we come to better recognize the diverse cultures of Filipinos, and in the process, collectively shape our Filipino identity and heritage." Buenaventura (2013) suggested that ambagan offers a strategy for enriching the Filipino language—by drawing from the vocabulary pool of various Philippine languages to include in the corpus of the national language. Cioco (2020) explained that ambagan contributes positively by encouraging writers to consider the

diversity of Philippine languages. San Juan (2008) stated that ambagan is a nationalization project that promotes the development of the national language by incorporating elements from other Philippine languages, not just Tagalog. Jose Jeralyn (2022) further noted that it is an effort to fully integrate non-Tagalog words into the Filipino language. In this study, the language of fishermen, along with their culture and livelihood, is highlighted and contributes to the lexicon.

The gap this study seeks to address is the lack of related studies on the linguistic register of fishermen, specifically Bontocanon fishermen. The absence of representation of their language in the corpus or vocabulary of the Filipino language is also evident. Additionally, many words in the fishermen's language remain unknown to most people. The researchers see these words as valuable inputs in the study and development of the Filipino language, particularly the language of fishermen. The objective of this study is to describe the language of Bontocanon fishermen according to: (a) contextual analysis, (b) sociolinguistic analysis, and (c) strategies and adaptations.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study that utilizes sociolinguistic analysis. The study design aims to present the social relationships among fishermen by examining how language is used to display relationships and hierarchies within the fishing community, and to explore how language is used to identify and express a fisherman's identity, including age, gender, and experience. This aims to describe the language of Bontoc fishermen according to: (a) contextual analysis, (b) sociolinguistic analysis, and (c) strategies and adaptations. The participants in this research are ten (10) selected fishermen residing in Barangay Poblacion, Bontoc, Southern Leyte. The criteria for selecting participants are based on age and occupation; those chosen are between 50-60 years old and rely solely on fishing as their livelihood. This study used purposive sampling to select fishermen who could provide sufficient and relevant data or information beneficial to this research.

This study was conducted in the municipality of Bontoc, Southern Leyte. According to PhilAtlas (n.d.), Bontoc is a coastal municipality with 40 barangays and a population of 29,799 as of 2020. Barangay Poblacion, a barangay of Bontoc, had 1,151 residents that year. Since this barangay is coastal, it is home to many fishermen in the municipality, making it a suitable location for gathering the data needed for this research.

Data collection was conducted through interviews, serving as the key data collection instrument to gather necessary information from the participants. The study used guide questions comprising five open-ended questions, which served as a basis for identifying unique terms:

1. Maajong buntag. Kumusta ang imong adlaw, imong pagpanagat, ug ang kinabuhi isip mangisdaay? (Good morning. How is your day, your fishing, and your life as a fisherman?)
2. Sa pagpanagat, kanus-a ang panahon/higayon nga abunda ang isda/kuha ug kanus-a pud ang minus ug kuha?
(In fishing, when is the time or season that fish are abundant or scarce)
3. Sa dili pa ang pagpanagat, unsa kasagaran ang inyong pagpangandam?
(Before fishing, what are your usual preparations?)
4. Sa higayon nga anaa na mo sa lawd, unsa ang inyong buhaton?
(When you're already at sea, what do you do?)
5. Human sa pagpanagat, unsa ang sunod nga inyong buhaton?
(After fishing, what do you do next?)

After validating the instrument, the researchers obtained written consent from each participant. Once consent was granted, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to the selected fishermen-respondents, ensuring that each participant met the predetermined criteria. Using the guide questions, the researchers collected data through interviews. Once the respondents answered the questions, the recorded data was analyzed and interpreted by the researchers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the collected data, the researchers identified various terms from the language register of fishermen. These terms were categorized according to their usage. Below are the terms related to: (1) terms for people, (2) types of fishing, (3) fishermen's activities, (4) fishing equipment, (5) fish movements, (6) other fishing terms, (7) idiomatic expressions, (8) beliefs, and (9) local fish. Each table contains the term and its meaning.

Table 1
Language Categories of Bontoc Fishermen

Category	Word	Meaning	Example in Statements
1. <i>Terms for People</i>	<i>mananagat</i>	fisherman	"Tungod sa mga mananagat, adunay pangan on nga mga isda

	<i>mangangabay</i>	fisherman's companion	ang katawhan.” “Pangapasa nag mga mangangabay kay magpalawd na ta.”
	<i>labasero</i>	fish buyer/seller	“Kung daghan ang isda nga makuha ron, manglabas tag bale napulo ka kilo.”
	<i>timunil</i>	boat steerer	“Tarungag <i>timun</i> diha kay nahiwi nag pukotan.”
2. Types of Fishing	<i>palabo</i>	afternoon fishing	“Di man siguro ta <i>magpalabo</i> ron kay kusog mag hangin.”
	<i>paulbo</i>	dawn fishing	“Sayu ug mata dong kay <i>paulbo</i> ta ugma.”
	<i>pamalaran</i>	night fishing	“Murag <i>mamalaran</i> ko ron kay daghan kunong lopoy mang awng.”
3. Fishermen's activities	<i>manabo</i>	heading of fishermen to the net that was previously set	“ <i>Manabo</i> ta kung makakuhag isda sila yo tata.”
	<i>habwa</i>	setting of the net	“ <i>Habwaon</i> kuno ang pukot kay naay bagyo”
	<i>lagak lukas</i>	lifting the net	“ <i>Lagakan</i> nato ang isda.” “ <i>Maglukas</i> ta sa atong gibilin nga pukot sa dagat dong.”
	<i>karol</i>	rocking the boat with a paddle	“Kinahanglan <i>karolan</i> nato aron mangdasmag ang mga isda sa gilagak nga pukot”
4. Fishing Equipment	<i>bugsay</i>	paddle	“Gamitag <i>bugsay</i> para mo tulin ang sakajan.”
	<i>sakajan</i>	boat	“Mag sakay ra tag <i>sakajan</i> ig manuroy na ta sa isla.”
	<i>pambot</i>	motorized boat	“ <i>Pambot</i> ang sakyan padulong canigao.”
	<i>pukot</i>	net	“ <i>Pukot</i> ang gamiton sa pagkuha sa isda sa amoa.”
	<i>mata</i>	mesh size of the net	“Magdepende sa <i>mata</i> sa pukot ang isda nga makuha.”
	<i>pasol paon</i>	fishing hook fishing bait	“ <i>Mamasol</i> ta adtos pantalan ta.” “Unsay imong <i>paon</i> para sa nukos?”
	<i>dong</i>	front part of the boat	“Adto ka sa una lingkod dapit, adto sa <i>dong</i> .”
	<i>ulin</i>	back part of the boat	“Diri sa <i>ulin</i> maglingkod ang magbugsay.”
	<i>tingga</i>	weight for the net	“Ang nakabug-at sa pukot kay ang nakakonektar nga mga <i>tingga</i> .”
	<i>argulya</i>	ring-shaped metal	“Ang <i>argulya</i> ang makatabang ug sikop sa pukot sa ilawm sa dagat.”
5. Fish Movements	<i>tunga</i>	appearance of fish in the surface	“Daghanas <i>tunga</i> sa lawd ganiha pagpalawd namo .”
	<i>lutaw</i>	float	“Daghang <i>nanglutaw</i> nga isa sulod sa pukot.”
	<i>tuy</i>	fish caught in the net's mesh	“Ag ubang isda kay <i>nangatuy</i> ra sa pukot.”
	<i>bihod</i>	fish eggs	“Walay isda labi na sa panahon sa <i>tingbihod</i> .”

	<i>kapaw</i>	fish splashing	“Tungod sa kadaghan sa isda, <i>nangapaw</i> na sa ibabaw sa dagat.”
	<i>sikbang</i>	small jump of fish	“Kita kos mga isda nga <i>nanikbang</i> .”
6. Other Terms	<i>lawd</i>	deep part of the ocean	“Naay iho tiki sa <i>lawd</i> .”
	<i>piliw</i>	shallow part of the sea	“Mas gagmay ang isda nga makuha kung sa <i>piliw</i> managat.”
	<i>subasko</i>	strong gust of wind	“Hadloka managat kung maabtan ug <i>subasko</i> .”
	<i>tempo</i>	weather	“Kung maglain ang <i>tempo</i> sa hangin, dili mi manglahos ug panagat.”
	<i>kabong</i>	violent waves	“Gahia ibira sa pukot kung adunay <i>kabong</i> .”
7. Idiomatic Expressions	<i>nangitum ang dagat</i>	term for large clusters of fish appearing in the surface	“ <i>Nangitum ang dagat</i> didto sa lawod”
	<i>napuwa ang dagat</i>	term for smaller clusters of fish	“ <i>Napuwa ang dagat</i> dapit sa <i>piliw</i> ”
	<i>Tingbitay sa iro</i>	term for times of rare or low fish catch	“ <i>Tingbitay sa iro</i> ang buwan sa Agosto.”
8. Beliefs	<i>di manghingan</i>	taboo on mentioning land animals when in sea	“Kung magpalawd, pos ang <i>manghingan</i> ug mananap nga anaa makita sa juta.”
	<i>di mangupos</i>	taboo on wringing clothes when in sea	“Bawal <i>mangupos</i> sa sanina kung naa sa lawd kay mawala ang grasya.”
	<i>palina</i>	blessing of equipment	“Ang <i>pagpalina</i> ang buhtaon kung gi de malas na sa pagpanagat.”
	<i>palutaw</i>	offering to sea spirits	“ <i>Magpalutaw</i> ug tulo ka manok sa lawd para ihalad sa mga nagpujo sa dagat nga dili ingon nato.”
9. Local Fish		<i>libgaw</i> <i>mangko (pirit, budburon, patikan, pangamihan)</i> <i>lopoy</i> <i>mangsi</i> <i>moong</i> <i>lahing (diwit)</i> <i>anduhaw</i> <i>tamarong</i> <i>tamban</i> <i>tabilong</i> <i>budloy</i> <i>bulgan</i> <i>pata</i> <i>tugnos</i> <i>saminan</i>	

Category 1: Terms for People

Contextual Analysis

These terms describe the various roles of people within the fishing community. Each role has a specific function essential to the successful fishing and distribution of the catch.

Sociolinguistic Aspects

1. **Identity:** These terms highlight the special roles and responsibilities of each individual within the fishing community. The use of these terms deepen each person's identity within their occupation.

2. **Communication:** Examples of phrases show practical communication among community members. These terms are used daily to ensure smooth coordination of tasks.
3. **Culture and Tradition:** Each term has a cultural context linked to fishing traditions. These specific terms reflect the richness of language and culture within fishing communities.

Strategies and Adaptation

1. **Role-Performance Strategy:** Each term represents a specific role necessary for the organized operations of fishing. Clear role distinctions make for smooth task distribution and operations.
2. **Environmental Adaptation:** The use of specific terms shows adaptation to the community's particular needs. These terms are part of their strategy to ensure efficiency and success in their livelihood.

In summary, these terms provide deeper insight into the organization, culture, and lifestyle of fishing communities. Studying and documenting these terms is imperative to preserving and enriching their cultural heritage.

Category 2: Types of Fishing

Contextual Analysis

These fishing methods demonstrate different strategies and times used by fishermen to ensure the best catch. Each method has a specific time of day or night most suitable for fishing, often influenced by sea and weather conditions.

Sociolinguistic Aspects

1. **Identity:** The use of specific terms for different fishing methods demonstrates the fishermen's in-depth knowledge and skills. Each term reflects their identity and expertise.
2. **Communication:** Sentence examples show practical communication and coordination among fishermen, with clear and precise language being crucial for a successful fishing trip.
3. **Culture and Tradition:** These terms are part of the broader culture and tradition of the fishing community, each type of fishing having its history and context connected to their way of life.

Strategies and Adaptation

1. **Weather Adaptation:** Fishermen adjust their activities according to weather conditions, such as strong winds or calm seas. This adaptation is important to ensure safety and success.
2. **Fish-Catching Strategy:** Different fishing times demonstrate strategies to catch fish active at particular times in day or night. This showcases their deep understanding of fish behavior and the environment.

In summary, examining fishing methods and their usage within the fishermen's daily activities offers deeper insight into their lifestyle, community organization, and traditions that enriches their cultural heritage.

Category 3: Fishermen's Activities

Contextual Analysis

These terms represent the various actions and tasks performed by fishermen in their daily fishing routines. Each has a specific meaning and application, and coordination and correct use of these actions are crucial for successful fishing.

Sociolinguistic Aspects

1. **Identity:** These terms reflect the fishermen's deep understanding of their tasks. Each term is part of their identity as experts in fishing.
2. **Communication:** Examples of sentences show practical communication between fishermen. The clear and accurate use of terms is essential for their safety and success.
3. **Culture and Tradition:** These activities are part of the broader culture and tradition of the fishing community. Each task has history and context related to their livelihood.

Strategies and Adaptation

1. **Fish-Catching Strategy:** The various actions reflect strategies for catching fish. The correct application of each action increases their chances of a good catch.
2. **Environmental Adaptation:** Fishermen adapt their tasks based on sea conditions and weather. These adaptations are crucial for ensuring their safety and success.

In summary, studying these tasks and their context in fishermen's daily routines offers a deeper understanding of their ways of living, community organization, and traditions that enhances their cultural heritage.

Category 4: Fishing Equipment

Contextual Analysis

These terms refer to the different tools essential in fishing. Each piece of equipment has a specific purpose and value, and combining them facilitates the fishing process. The sentence examples show the practical application of each tool in fishermen's daily activities.

Sociolinguistic Aspects

1. **Identity:** These terms reflect the fishermen's deep understanding of their equipment. Each term is part of their identity as experts in fishing.
2. **Communication:** Examples of sentences show practical communication among fishermen. The clear and accurate use of terms is vital for their safety and success.
3. **Culture and Tradition:** Fishing equipment is part of the broader culture and tradition of the fishing community. Each tool has history and context related to their livelihood.

Strategies and Adaptation

1. **Fish-Catching Strategy:** The different equipment reflects various strategies for catching fish. The proper use of these equipment increases their chances of a successful catch.
2. **Environmental Adaptation:** Fishermen adapt their equipment to sea and weather conditions. These adaptations are essential for their safety and success.

In summary, studying fishing equipment and its use in fishermen's daily activities offers a deeper understanding of their lifestyle, community organization, and traditions, enhancing their cultural heritage.

Category 5: Fish Movements

Contextual Analysis:

These terms describe the various movements of fish, which are essential for fishermen to observe to ensure a successful catch. Understanding fish movements enhances the chances of success in their livelihood.

Sociolinguistic Aspects:

1. **Identity:** These terms reflect fishermen's specialized knowledge about fish behavior. The use of specific vocabulary is part of their professional language.
2. **Communication:** Sentence examples show how these terms aid communication among fishermen. The clear and precise use of these terms is crucial for mutual understanding in their tasks.
3. **Culture and Tradition:** Each fish movement has a cultural context related to fishing traditions. The knowledge and use of these terms highlight the rich language and culture within fishing communities.

Strategies and Adaptations:

1. **Fishing Strategy:** The different fish movements provide clues on where and how they can be caught. The correct interpretation of each movement increases the likelihood of a successful catch.
2. **Environmental Adaptation:** Fishermen adjust their techniques based on fish movements and sea conditions. Such adaptation is essential to ensure safety and success in fishing.

In summary, these terms provide a deeper understanding of fish behavior and fishermen's strategies for capturing them. Studying and documenting fish movements is essential for preserving and enriching the cultural heritage and fishing knowledge.

Category 6: Other Fishing Terms

Contextual Analysis:

These terms are essential to the daily lives of fishermen, as they showcase their environmental awareness of the environment and readiness to the changes in sea and weather conditions.

Sociolinguistic Aspects:

1. **Identity:** These terms convey fishermen's specialized fishing knowledge in their environment. The use of these terms showcase their expertise and skills in fishing.

2. **Communication:** Sentence examples show how specialized language is used within the fishing community. Communication becomes more effective when everyone understands the specific terms and their meanings.

3. **Culture and Tradition:** Each term has a cultural context linked to fishing traditions. Their use and appreciation reflect the richness of their culture and knowledge.

In summary, these terms highlight the importance of language in expressing fishermen's knowledge and experiences in their daily activities and interactions with their environment.

Category 7: Idiomatic Expressions

Contextual Analysis:

These idiomatic expressions capture specific observations, conditions, and situations encountered in the daily lives of fishermen. Each expression provides a description of the sea or the state of fishing. This reflects a deep understanding of their environment and natural patterns. These expressions are used to communicate practical information about fishing conditions and facilitate understanding and efficient decision-making within the community.

Sociolinguistic Aspects:

1. **Identity:** The idiomatic expressions reflect the fishermen's linguistic creativity and their connection to the sea. These expressions are distinct to the community showcasing the specialized knowledge about fishing conditions and experiences.
2. **Communication:** The expressions serve as effective shorthand in daily communication. These terms convey complex environmental and situational nuances with few words. This facilitates quick and efficient coordination, which is essential for successful fishing operations.
3. **Culture and Tradition:** These expressions are deeply embedded in the fishermen's culture. This reveals their historical relationship with the sea. The use of idiomatic language showcases a cultural heritage of storytelling and expression.

Strategies and Adaptations:

1. **Adaptation to Fishing Conditions:** Fishermen use these expressions to adapt their strategies based on the observed state of the sea and fish availability. Understanding idiomatic descriptions helps them anticipate conditions and adjust their techniques accordingly.
2. **Environmental Awareness:** The expressions are tools for environmental literacy, enabling fishermen to interpret signs from the sea and make informed choices about where and when to fish. This knowledge ensures sustainability and efficiency in their practices.

In summary, the idiomatic expressions used by fishermen provide insight into their expertise, cultural identity, and connection to nature. These expressions are not only functional but also show a shared understanding within the fishing community, emphasizing the richness of their language and the wisdom contained within it.

Category 8: Fishing Beliefs

Contextual Analysis:

Fishing beliefs and rituals do not just provide fishermen with spiritual guidance and protection but also reflect their connection to nature and culture. These practices deepen their identity as stewards of the sea. The use of these terms reflects traditional knowledge that expands their understanding of the environment and their place in society.

Sociolinguistic Aspects:

The sociolinguistic analysis of fishing beliefs and rituals emphasizes the study of language as a mirror of culture, identity, and faith within fishing communities. It shows how their language becomes a part of daily life and interacts with various aspects of their environment and society.

Category 8: Local Fish Names

The local fish species mentioned here are important in the context of fishing and food in local communities. Here is some information about some of these fish:

1. **Libgaw** - Also known as mullet in English, libgaw is a type of fish commonly found in coastal areas and rivers. It is usually caught for food and has many subspecies depending on the location.
2. **Mangko** (Pirit, Budburon, Patikan, Pangamihan) - Mangko is a group of fish commonly found in freshwater areas. The names of the different types of mangko may vary locally depending on the area.
3. **Lopoy** - Lopoy is a type of small fish usually used as a flavoring or in local dishes. It is commonly caught using small nets or along the shore.

4. **Mangsi** - This is a type of fish usually found in the ocean. Mangsi has various species depending on the region.
5. **Moong** - Moong is commonly found along the shore and is usually used in local dishes. It is a small fish with high nutritional value.
6. **Lahing (Diwit)** - Also known as anchovy in English, lahing or diwit is a small type of fish commonly caught for commercial purposes and food.
7. **Anduhaw** - This is a type of coastal fish usually caught for food. It can be found in deep oceans as well as in smaller coastal areas.
8. **Tamarong** - Tamarong is a type of small fish usually caught for food. It has a reddish-brown color and typically lives along the coast.
9. **Tamban** - Also known as sardines, tamban is a group of small fish commonly caught in deep seas. It is an important and well-known fish type in local fisheries.
10. **Tabilong** - Tabilong is a type of fish commonly found in freshwater or rivers. It is known for its whitish-brown color and is usually caught for food.

The mentioned local fish types highlight the significance of fishing in the economy and culture of local communities. Their names and characteristics emphasize their role as part of local cuisine and trade.

IV. CONCLUSION

The language of the Bontoc fishermen reflects the value of their local language, preservation of tradition, identity, and cultural appreciation of the fishermen. In summary, studying the language of Bontoc fishermen not only offers insights into their daily lives and traditions but also emphasizes the role of language in expressing the culture and identity of a community. This study aims to preserve and deepen the understanding of their culture and familiar experiences related to fishing.

Following the conclusions drawn from this study, the researchers recommend: to expand this study to cover different language registers of fishermen in other barangays and municipalities of Southern Leyte; to develop a more comprehensive collection or glossary of terms with in-depth analysis of phonological, morphological, ethnolinguistic, and other language structures; and to utilize this study in educational settings, such as incorporating it as supplementary teaching material.

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