



## CUYONON.... FOR MORE...OR NO MORE IN PUERTO PRINCESA CITY

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<p><b>Received:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 <b>Accepted:</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 <b>Published:</b> 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021</p>	<p>This study aimed to investigate the status of Cuyonon language in Puerto Princesa City. It sought to determine the language ability of the participants; the domains of language use; language attitudes in learning and using Cuyonon, and their actual Cuyonon proficiency. The participants were chosen from the genealogies of the oldest, largest, and well-known families listed in the book Puerto Princesa during the Second World War from 1941-1945, from the lists of the first personalities in Cuyonon history and the first three barangays of the city with the most Cuyonon residents. This study used the qualitative phenomenological method of research through purposive and convenient sampling. Data were analyzed, transcribed, thematized and coded manually. Based on the findings, as to the status of Cuyonon, the participants viewed that Cuyonon speakers in Puerto Princesa City were few yet on surviving status. In terms of language use, Cuyonon language at home was maintained only when speaking to their siblings and in interactants in their neighborhoods, workplace and recognized interlocutors outside their homes. They valued their cultural identity but most of them were passive speakers since they would not speak Cuyonon at once, only if interlocutors were recognized as Cuyonon. They did not find learning and speaking Cuyonon difficult since their parents are Cuyonon speakers who were considered as the main source of learning the language. The Cuyonon language use was <i>heritage</i> and language vitality was on Level 7 <i>shifting</i> (EGIDS) and described as <i>definitely endangered</i> by UNESCO. Related to language attitudes in learning, using, describing, maintaining and preserving the language, the Cuyonon participants carry both positive and negative attitudes toward their native language, first and second languages use. The participants were proficient Cuyonon speakers. To sum up, the more domains for the Cuyonon language and positive language attitudes the higher language prestige, preservation and vitality it has; with less or no language use and maintenance, frequent language shifting and negative language attitudes lead to language endangerment and loss. Several ways and methods could be used by the family, school and community to maintain and preserve the Cuyonon language: use simple command in Cuyonon, support Cuyonon groups in social media, Cuyonon radio programs, Cuyonon mass, and use of mother tongue in school.</p>

**Keywords:** Cuyono, language use, language attitudes, language proficiency

### INTRODUCTION

Language is regarded as a vital aspect of ethnicity to express cultural identity. Remarkably, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimated that there are 7,099 languages around the world. However, between 1950 and 2010, 230 languages went extinct, a third of the world's languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers left. They claimed that every 14 days a language dies with its last speaker. With this, 50 to 90 percent of them are foreseen to become extinct by the next century.

The Philippines is diverse in culture and in language (Halili, 2010). It is blessed with several ethnic groups (Garcia, Abon and Reyes, 2016) and a multilingual people, mostly non-Tagalogs and non-Cebuano (Quakenbush, 1989). Of the more than a hundred languages being spoken by the different ethnolinguistic groups of dwellers in the more than seven thousand and one hundred islands comprising the Philippines, eight of them are considered major languages. These major languages are Ilocano, Pangasinan, Pampango, Tagalog, Bicol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon and Waray-Samarnon

(Belvez, 2015). In Palawan, the languages are categorized as indigenous (Kalamianon, Agutaynon, Batak, Tagbanwa, Palaweño, Molbog, Cuyonon and Cagayanen) and immigrant (Ilongo, Cebuano, Ilocano, Waray and Tagalog which is more diverse, etc) (Quakenbush, 1989)

This study aimed to investigate what is the status of Cuyonon language in Puerto Princesa City; what is the language ability of the participants; in what domains Cuyonon language is used; what attitudes do the speakers have in learning and using it; and what kind of Cuyonon speakers are there in the city.

There are several studies that have been conducted locally and internationally investigating language use and attitude among ethnic groups. It is very evident that no study had been conducted on the Cuyonon status, use, attitude and proficiency. Hence, this study is conducted.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed qualitative research in a deductive approach on the lived experiences of a phenomenon for Cuyonon participants in learning and using the Cuyonon language. The purpose is to describe the commonalities of the experience. Textual data were gathered through face-to-face interviews with the help of audio-video recorders. Likewise, the researcher assumed the role as participant observer in gathering the needed data.

The locale of the study is concentrated in the specific residence in Puerto Princesa City of the selected participants who are genealogies of the oldest, largest and well-known families listed in the book *Puerto Princesa during the Second World War a Narrative History 1941-1945* (San Juan, 1998), from the list of the "firsts" personalities in Cuyonon history (Fernandez, et al, 1989) and the first three Indigenous People Mandated Representatives (IPMR) and Chieftains from Bgy. San Manuel, Bgy. Sta. Monica and Bgy. San Pedro which have the most Cuyonon residents in the city. A group of 24 households composed of parents/grandparents, aged 31 and over 50 years old, indicators of varying civil status (single, married, widow, separated) were the participants in this study. It is important that the first generation (grandparents) and second generation (parents) have lived for 15 years in the city so they can relate to the old days and can describe their observations in the recent years, as to linguistic change in learning and/ or using the Cuyonon language and their language attitudes.

Semi-structured and unstructured interview questionnaire was used to stimulate responses from the participants. The standards in conducting interviews was also followed. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, their real names were not mentioned in the discussion of the paper but instead replaced with Cuyonon codes.

The gathered data including the personal experiences and observations were analyzed in several phases such as transcription, categorization based on the research problem and purpose of the study and coding. Results were presented through descriptive-narrative form.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Status of Cuyonon Language in Puerto Princesa City

As to opinion on the present status of Cuyonon language in Puerto Princesa City, almost all the participants have similar perception that the speakers of the language were few. The majority of the participants affirmed that Cuyonon language was gradually losing yet on surviving status.

The participants perception happened with the following reasons: Only middle age (ages of 40 and 60 years old) to old age (61 years old and above) were the speakers of pure Cuyonon and the younger generations spoke Tagalog, influx of migrants, mixed marriage, the city was cosmopolitan with the presence of language shifting, they adapted to their environment where they recognized common language in the community and used it in interpersonal communication so they could relate and associate to the person they were conversing like friends, peers and non-Cuyonon speakers and they were not fluent in Cuyonon that they somehow unaware that they language shifted because the Cuyonon vocabulary is not enough.

As Eder (2004) argued it is through the Cuyonon language that they [the Cuyonon] are distinguished from others though frequently they also use Tagalog and English for practical reasons. There are several factors of development of modern Philippine life that contribute to the gradual decrease of Cuyonon ethnic identity such as the "influx of migrants from different parts of the country, education, tourism, frequent intermarriages of Cuyonos to other ethnicity, geographic mobility of Cuyonon, religion, and growing class differences".

People are inevitably confronted with difficult choices about which language they wish or need to speak. The major driver of language shift is the decision to abandon a more local or less prestigious language, typically because the target of the shift is a language seen as more modern, useful or giving access to greater social mobility and economic opportunities (Kandler, Unger, Steele, 2010). As defined, language shift refers to the process, or the event, whereby members of the community abandon their original vernacular language and use another language (Ostler, 2017; Kandler; Dwyer, 2011; Unger, Steele, 2010; Ravindranath, 2009). According to Sofu (2009), language shift is inevitable, if there are two or more languages in contact. Whatever or wherever it occurs, it resulted to a common feature to all shift situations, it affects communities in contact with and under control by a more dominant community. In the study of Wendel and Heinrich as cited by Heinrich (2005), language shift is a phenomenon occurring solely in dominated communities.

Concerning the status of Cuyonon language in the city, the participants were also asked if the Cuyonon language will continue to exist. Based on their response, they were affirmative that their language will continue to exist, if the community will do something to preserve it. They thought that the use of Cuyonon language will be maintained. They also believed that existence of Indigenous People Mandated Representative (IPMR)/Chieftain in each barangay and the existence of Gagued ang Cuyonon organization has a positive impact. They believed that the program of the said organizations as well as the City’s and Province’s plans and programs related to Cuyonon preservation should be promoted. Lastly, they stressed that parents should protect the Cuyonon language by teaching and encouraging their children and grandchildren to speak and use Cuyonon. The participants also perceived that Cuyonon language will last if there were still young generation of speakers of the language.

As what the Chair of the Permanent Forum of the Indigenous Issues of New York (2016) explained “saving indigenous languages is crucial to ensure the protection of the cultural identity and dignity of indigenous peoples and safeguard their traditional heritage.” Based on the response of the participants, they were also aware that Cuyonon language is declining and they expressed fear of losing

**Personal and Reported Language Ability**

Based on personal profile, almost all household participants revealed that their language at home was mostly Cuyonon though very few of them speak bilingual as Cuyonon and Tagalog and rare speak pure Tagalog, Tagalog and English or Cuyonon and English. Further, their language spoken were Tagalog, English, Bisaya and Ilonggo. Most of them were parents and grandparents from 31 and over 50 years old, born in Puerto Princesa City. They were mostly professionals and government employees. As to language background, their first language learned and language best spoken was Cuyonon. Similarly, the language most frequently used was Cuyonon alone followed by Tagalog and Cuyonon. Lastly, the first language spoken by their parents was mostly Cuyonon.

The participants were also asked to evaluate their language ability to speak English, Tagalog and Cuyonon. This was done through interview. Each language has set of four micro skills of language learning such as listening, speaking, reading and writing that allow an individual to understand and speak languages for effective interpersonal communication. To better establish the reported language ability of the participants, the researcher preferred to place their responses on the table to show how they evaluated themselves.

**Table 1. Reported language ability of the participants**

<b>How do you rate your skills in:</b>	<b>1 Very Good</b>	<b>2 Good</b>	<b>3 Just enough (Semi-speaker)</b>	<b>4 Can understand only (Passive speaker)</b>	<b>5 Do not know (Non-speaker)</b>
<b>English</b>					
1. speaking English	2	<b>12</b>	9		
2. listening to English	4	<b>10</b>	9		
3. reading English	4	<b>10</b>	9		
4. writing English	1	<b>12</b>	10		
<b>Tagalog</b>					
1. Pagsasalita sa Tagalog	2	<b>13</b>	8		
2. Pakikinig sa Tagalog	3	<b>12</b>	8		
3. Pagbasa sa Tagalog	3	<b>12</b>	8		
4. Pagsusulat sa Tagalog	3	<b>11</b>	9		
<b>Cuyonon</b>					
1. Paglimeg y Cuyonon	9	<b>12</b>	2		
2. Pagpamati y Cuyonon	9	<b>11</b>	2	1	
3. Pagbasa y Cuyonon	8	<b>10</b>	5		
4. Pagsulat y Cuyonon	8	<b>9</b>	5		1

Table 1 shows that Cuyonos in Puerto Princesa City were highly multilingual/bilingual speakers since they can speak more than one language such as Cuyonon/Tagalog, Tagalog/English, Cuyonon/English or Cuyonon/English/Tagalog combined. Mostly regarded themselves with a good ability not only in Cuyonon but also in English and Tagalog. It could be noted that the very good and good ratings in communication skills in Cuyonon were nearly equal. This indicates that they were really Cuyonon speakers. However, it could also be noted that writing skill was the lowest in good rating since the participants found it difficult to write in Cuyonon languages.

Some Filipinos have the capacity to use more than two languages. As described by Halili (2010), some Filipinos are trilingual, speaking in Filipino, English and an indigenous/ethnic language. Filipinos speak different regional languages and dialects because of intermarriages and internal migration and language education have helped to reduce language barriers. In addition, the languages that the participants declared as spoken is noted to determine if they are bilinguals or multilinguals since this would lead to language shift. Suek (2014) explained that being bilingual or multilingual speaking is not always advantageous in the community somehow it has also its disadvantage such as the

minimal use of and negative attitudes to the native language that would eventually lead to the language loss of the native language.

### The Domains of Language Use

A domain in a sociocultural concept that is based from topics of communication, relationships between communicators, and locales of communication that describes where, when, who speaks, which language, to whom and about what. These domains can be used as indicators if there is a language a shift. As Are (2015) emphasized that the more the language is used in different spheres, the better its chances of survival.

To determine the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scales (EGIDS) level, it is necessary to determine first the domains of language use since the first questions for assigning an EGIDS level is "*How is the language used?*" (Quakenbush and Simons, 2015). With this, the following questions were asked to the participants. What language do you use whenever you speak with in the following: (1) sister/brother at home? (2) teacher in the community? (3) co-workers? (4) neighbors? (5) Cuyonon vendors/sellers (6) food attendants in the restaurants, fast food, cafes? (7) a Cuyonon friend? (8) priest/pastor after the mass? (9) jeepney drivers? (10) in the banks? (11) in the hospitals/clinics? (12) speaking with community visitors you do not know? (13) speaking with visitors you do not know who arrive at your home? (14) speaking with Cuyonon city councilor/barangay officials? (15) praying to God?

### The Family or Home Domain

Based on interview, the most dominant language used at home when talking to their children was Tagalog though few revealed that they also conversed to them in Cuyonon. Parents affirmed that they were understood when communicating to their children because they responded but in Tagalog. So, this somehow shows that the children understand the language but they cannot speak it.

Yet, very few participants reported that their children are trained in English because it is a universal language and they need it for their career. When asked why in Tagalog and English, they affirmed that the pronunciation and fluency of their children would be affected by the distinct accent of being a Cuyonon, Bisaya and Ilonggo. When speaking to their spouses, they are also using Tagalog.

Clyne's study (as cited by Abelhadi, 2017) stressed that the family environment is a motivating factor in the promotion of successful intergenerational maintenance of the community language. However, the language used at home may be affected by external factors such as mixed marriages, the birth of new children, entering in the workforce, and children's departure from the parental home. According to Warsi (2017), using one's mother's tongue at home is the major preserver of own cultural identity since there is a constant interaction in the home language which is a contradiction in this paper.

Warsi (2017) emphasized that the use of mother tongue should be encouraged. It should always be practiced, spoken, and taught to the new generations. The result of this study shows that the domain of Cuyonon language use at home happens when both parents are Cuyonon but Tagalog/English or Tagalog alone is used by parents who speak different languages when conversing with their children and spouses. Result of this home domain implies that the family has a big role in the maintenance of the language of the cultural ethnicity.

### The common reasons given for Tagalog preference at home

The common reasons why Tagalog is preferred at home include: (1) common ground for communication because spouses have other language/dialect spoken; (2) it is the language they heard at home because parents prefer to use it; (3) the pronunciation and fluency of the children might be affected by Cuyonon language which has peculiar characteristics; and (4) it is the choice of their children to learn Cuyonon when they grow up.

As Alzayed (2015) emphasized, native language preservation is not only about the first generations' obligation but other generations should as well learn to keep it. He also pointed out that the success of maintaining and preserving a native language depends on family relationship, parental attitudes and peer influence. Kama and Yamirudeng (2011) have found that Malay language is seen as a relevant ethno-cultural marker and its usage is limited within family, relatives, and close friends and Malay language is preserved along with Thai language, making many Malay Muslims bilingual, which is quite typical in the northern border provinces of Thailand. This finding is also similar to the result of this study that both Cuyonon and Tagalog languages are kept and used at home by members of the family. This implies that it is everyone's accountability and responsibility to keep, practice, use, and preserve one's language regardless of age or generation.

### The Education or School Domain

When at school, they were speaking Tagalog or English as medium of instruction; while Cuyonon is spoken outside classes. Wan, et al., (2015) explained that the consequence of education somehow gives pride to their family that the children will be able to have prestige in the economic and social benefits that are enjoyed by other communities. However, education is seen detrimental to the ethnic language because they are not able to use and practice their own language. As Teng and Ling (2012) reported that ethnic language is still strong in the family and religious domains but has little place in education and mass media domains. This finding partly contradicts in this study, wherein in this paper, only the family shows strong domain while religious, education and mass media domains have little sphere. This implies

that somehow schooling affects the use of Cuyonon language since there is a mandated medium of instruction in the Philippines where their proficiency in Cuyonon is affected.

### The Work Domain

In the realm of employment (work domain), most of the participants were working in the government and they revealed that they used Cuyonon language to their co-workers and neighbors though there were few who speak Tagalog and English too. It is evident that the participants insist on using Cuyonon language in their workplace, even in the presence of those who cannot understand it.

This finding is supported by Tajolosa (2014) where she found that Batak is used primarily by members of the community at home and when conversing with Batak friends, neighbors, and coworker. As observed in other offices visited, there were signages written in Cuyonon like "*Dayon Camo*", "*Matamang Salamat Kaloyan kamo ateng Guinong Dios*" and the like. This implies a good sign of positive attitudes as language maintenance towards their cultural identity.

### The Neighborhood Domain

Most of the participants admitted that they used Cuyonon when conversing to their neighbors, though others signified that they also used Tagalog since they also have neighbors who were non-Cuyonon speakers.

### The Friendship Domain

For friendship domains and identified interlocutors, such as Cuyonon friends, Cuyonon vendor, Cuyonon city councilors/barangay officials, they were really speaking Cuyonon to them. Results revealed that Cuyonon language was used by the participants if they knew the ethnic identity of their interactants.

### The Religious or Worship Domain

As to the domain of worship or religious domain, only few revealed that they prayed in Cuyonon, the rest prayed in English, Cuyonon and Tagalog. Very few confirmed that they attended Cuyonon mass and rare declared that his personal prayer was in Cuyonon because he felt that he got closer to the Lord when praying in Cuyonon.

### The Social and Public Domain

In terms of language use in social/public domain, the participants also have pattern in the following domains: speaking to food attendants in the restaurants, fast food, cafes, priest/pastor after the mass or service, jeepney drivers, in the banks, in the hospitals/clinic, visitors they do not know in the community and visitors they do not know who arrive at home. The majority of them revealed that they preferred Tagalog first but whenever they recognized that the person they were talking to was Cuyonon or known to be Cuyonon, only then they spoke Cuyonon.

Findings revealed that Cuyonon language was not customarily used by the majority of the participants when they were outside their home. They tend to ask first if they were on the same ethnicity and/or sense the accent or tone or vocabulary of the people they talked to before they will speak Cuyonon spontaneously if not they went back to Tagalog as means of communication. This means that Cuyonon speakers also spoke Tagalog outside their home or when conversing to non-Cuyonon speakers. Findings of this study is supported by what Tajolosa (2006) have found that Tagbanua use Tagalog in communicative venues outside the home when they communicate with non-Tagbanua speaker or even within their own ethnolinguistic group. Another study of Tajolosa (2014) supports the findings of the study that Tagalog is preferred with pastor, teachers, and non-Batak visitors in the community.

With the languages used by the Cuyonon speakers in different domains, results showed that Cuyonon language vitality index is *heritage*, the language retains an identificational function for its native community but it is no longer used fluently by all generations. (EGIDS 7-9). With the basic understanding of this EGIDS level and considering the responses of the participants, data fall on Level 7 which is labeled as *shifting*. This is described as *the child-bearing generations can use the language among themselves but they do not normally transmit it to their children* which UNESCO identified it as *definitely endangered*.

### Language Attitude

Language attitudes are the summary evaluation of linguistic stimuli (McKenzie, 2019). They are evaluative reactions to different language varieties that can be socialized through various agents like educators, peers, family and the media (Dragojevic, 2017). The study surveyed the attitudes of the Cuyonon participants toward their own language and other dominant languages they speak to assess the Cuyonon language vitality.

### The prestige of Cuyonon ethnicity/cultural identity of Cuyonon language

Prestige has been an enriching agent of language attitude findings (Garrett, 2009). As to language prestige of ethnicity identity, Cuyonon language is the most prestigious ethnolinguistic language among the minority groups in Palawan (Tajolosa, 2014).

### Speakers' Portrayal of Cuyonon Language

Description of a language from the participants is significant for this postulate their language attitude toward their vernacular language. Cuyonon participants described their own language as amazing, very precious, very rich in

vocabulary, unique, musical and sweetest language that was easy to understand, natural, soft, very meaningful, it fosters unity, have a Spanish and Latin culture, romantic accent, beautiful, its segregated them from the rest because it showed cultural identity, it had a request signal like *patigayon* [please, kindly, would you mind if], it could interpret other language in one word like *pagpasunaid* [empathy], it sounded very peaceful, friendly and loving language.

They also stressed that Cuyonon was the language closest to their heart. It was their innate identity because of the following reasons: it showed who they are; it was the language of the heart and symbolized their ethnicity; their parents are Cuyonon; they were born and grown up with it; it was where they came from; it signified closeness.

### Feeling of pride being Cuyonon speakers

Showing pride towards one's language is confirmatory of their attachment to their cultural identity. As stated in UNESCO Factor 8 which is Community Member's Attitudes toward their Own Languages, member of a speech community may see their language as essential to their community and identity, and they promote it. The more positive their attitudes are and more pride they have in language and traditions, the stronger the language is.

Almost all household participants liked the Cuyonon language very much and they spoke best in Cuyonon because they affirmed it was their language and they declared they used it at home. They never feel ashamed of being known as Cuyonon as it is God's gift. Yet, they were proud having a tribal identity. For them "being ashamed of the language is the key to the language loss of Cuyonon

Moreover, the participants expressed happiness whenever they hear someone speaking Cuyonon. For some, they feel close and secured whenever they hear Cuyonon speakers especially when they are in other places.

### Feeling of Sadness, Dismay and Regret being Cuyonon speakers

Cuyonon speakers also expressed sadness not only to those parents who are both Cuyono but their children cannot speak, read and write Cuyonon but also those who are identified Cuyono but cannot speak, read and write Cuyonon language as well. They feel frustrated about it. Most of them feel sad, pity, sorry, shame, bitterness and annoyance. They feel that these people have a feeling of shame, arrogance, selfishness, ungratefulness on their culture.

A negative attitude for keeping ethnic language was expressed by very few of the participants, for them being nationalistic was important that is why Filipino was the language first taught in the family and it will be and still be taught for practical reasons while English for them is for global.

Some also expressed regret for not teaching their children Cuyonon, because of mixed marriage though they wish that they did somehow.

Few are still wishing and hoping to teach Cuyonon though very little parents/grandparents revealed that they never tried teaching the children the Cuyonon language and one commented that it is seen 'not in' in their age.

As Molina (2012) affirmed that the attitude of the family is using the language contribute to the biggest threats to Philippine languages. This is through their conscious and unconscious decisions of not passing on their native language and culture to their children instead prioritizing the regional and national languages. In some provinces, children who are fluent in regional and national languages are more suitable to have better education and employment.

### The language vitality

Language vitality is the ability to maintain and protect its existence through time with a distinctive identity and language. Most of the participants affirmed that they were able to speak Cuyonon language and they did not find it difficult to learn and use because their parents are Cuyonon while rare declared that they learned because of their Cuyonon nanny, relatives, friends, neighbors and companions at home. In this case, they were able to frequently hear and use the language.

Yet, at the parents'/grandparents' level, very few attested that they taught the language to their children. As Olaifa (2014) emphasized, "therefore, it is important for any human society to prevent its languages from becoming unknown." Responses showed that the participants were passive Cuyonon speakers who learned the language at home by hearing it utmost from the parents. This implies that frequent language use is very effective in learning the language.

The participants were also very appreciative and happy for people who were non Cuyonon but have shown interest to learn the language. They found them very commendable for learning Cuyonon language.

These findings are supported by *ethnologue* that describes the vitality of the language if it is being passed on to children as their first language, or when it is used frequently and widely within the community. Other factors related to language vitality are descriptions of languages that are used, use of this language by others and the degree and nature of language shift that may be taking place (Eberhand, Simons and Fennig, 2019). During interview, there were participants who also reported that they knew non Cuyonon speakers who are very fluent in the language. This somehow shows language vitality since the language is learned and used by non-Cuyonon ethnicity.

Moreover, most of the participants also agreed that it was necessary for a Cuyono to speak the language. For them, it was very important and a mandate that an individual could and should speak Cuyonon language so he could be called a genuine Cuyonon and so people will recognize him as Cuyonon. Similarly, for some, if an individual could not speak Cuyonon, for them it was a sign of ignominy of the language.

However, some confirmed that their children refused to learn the language and commented that the way to learn and use the language was the children's choice. This case indicates that the parents have a big role to perform.

Related to this, most of the participants suggested that the parents should speak Cuyonon and teach and oblige their children to learn Cuyonon language at home.

As Dragojevic (2017) argued that language is an important symbol of social identity, and people tend to attribute more solidarity to members of their linguistics community especially when that community is characterized by high or increasing vitality (i.e., status, demographics, institutional support). Through language, people identify themselves, other people and their surroundings when communicating (Christopher, 2014; Are, 2015; Hemat and Heng, 2012). Result implies that it is very vital that every Cuyono need to speak Cuyonon as evidence that they belong to that cultural identity.

### Source of being a Cuyonon

As to the source of being a Cuyonon. the participants were certain that language, parents, place of birth, the length of residence in the community, and religion were the sources for being a Cuyono. Parents were the main source of being Cuyonon followed by language, place of birth, the length of residence in the community but not so much from religion. For some, language and parents were the sources while a deviant number affirmed as community and parents, language and place of birth, and language and community.

### The Hints of Language Shift, Maintenance and Preservation

This section covers the hints on language shift, maintenance towards the language vitality and preservation. Language maintenance refers to the collective decision using the cultural language. The United Nations posited that languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. As what indicated in the article "Can your Preserve the Culture without a Language" that the hardest part of a culture to preserve is the language. For those who are learning the language, they are learning the culture with hard beautiful, social work lifelong process; and for those who want to preserve a culture, they have to learn the language and teach it to others.

### The positive feeling toward language maintenance and preservation

Having a positive language attitude signifies attachment to cultural ethnicity towards maintenance and preservation of the Cuyonon language. Almost all household participants affirmed that they liked the Cuyonon language very much. Most of them were very proud and honored of their language. They found it as a reflection of their true ethnic identity so they don't want to forget and loss it so that the next generations will still learn, use and speak it. Hence, it should be maintained, developed and preserved because it was considered the language of the soul.

### The Role of the Family and the Community in Language Preservation

Since the home was claimed as the best place to preserve the language, the researcher asked the participants to validate the listed possible ways to preserve the language at home. Based on the data, the majority of the participants revealed that they always taught their children/grandchildren to speak Cuyonon language but they seldom gave their children/grandchildren lots of opportunities to interact/converse in Cuyonon with families and individuals, sang Cuyonon songs with the family, gave riddles and sayings in Cuyonon language to the family, encouraged their family to maintain their native language and culture and allot time during the day to speak Cuyonon with their family. Aside from the listed ways, the participants also suggested that the parents should perform their role to speak Cuyonon and teach and oblige their children to learn Cuyonon language at home as well.

During visit, the participants also emphasized that all Cuyonons must make ways to ensure that their language will be preserved and will last for long. The language should be included as medium of instruction in the school/mother tongue specifically in Department of Education. They also have their message to the non-Cuyonons who live in Puerto Princesa City. For them, these people should find time to learn Cuyonon language. Through this, they will be loved more by the Cuyonons. Another message given was for the Cuyonon older and younger generations, who must continue using the language for the Cuyonon culture; treasure, and dignity lie on them and they should not be ashamed using the language because it symbolizes Cuyonon ethnicity.

### Language proficiency

Language proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language. There are other measures to test language proficiency like the lexical ability test and word/sentence translations. In this study, proficiency was used to indicate the degree to which Cuyonon language is used effectively in a face to face interaction.

The participants were evaluated by a pure Cuyonon couple and members of the Tribong Cuyonon/Gaqued y ang mga Cuyonon organizations using the interpretation of Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) and Quakenbush. The evaluators listened and watched the video recordings on how the participants speak. Based on the evaluation, most of the participants had been evaluated proficient in their language. For ILR scale, a proficiency measure developed by the US State Department, a Level 3 professional working proficiency (S-3), the participants can converse a variety of topics with ease and can discuss with comprehension what others have said. For Quakenbush, Level 3, the participants are able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics. Uses language acceptably, but with some noticeable imperfection. Errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the interviewer, the interviewee can effectively combine structure and vocabulary to combine meaning accurately.

Based on Vallejo's (2014) type of speaker, most of the participants were *fluent speakers* who are able to engage in spontaneous conversations with very minimal use of borrowings while the rest are *neo-speakers* who are the product of language revitalization initiative. These speakers are exposed in the language but they did not learn the language when they were young. Now, they are learning the language in their own initiative.

With the observation of the researcher and based on interview, rare testified that they never learned Cuyonon when they were young and they never taught to speak and use the language. But as they grew, they were eventually learning and trying to learn the language and the researcher categorized them as *neo-speakers*.

As further explained by Vallejo (2014), of all the types of speakers, the neo-speakers are the most aware on the disappearance of the language and they are particular to using it as their way of preserving their language.

In conclusion, Cuyonon language in the city was declining yet on surviving status. In terms of language use, Cuyonon language at home was maintained only when speaking to their siblings and in interactants in their neighborhoods, workplace and recognized interlocutors outside of their homes. They valued their cultural identity but most of them were passive speakers since they did not speak Cuyonon at once, only if interlocutors were recognized as Cuyonon. They did not find learning and speaking Cuyonon difficult since their parents are Cuyonon who were considered as the main source of learning the language. The Cuyonon language use was *heritage* and language vitality was on Level 7 *shifting* (EGIDS) and described as *definitely endangered* by UNESCO. Related to language attitudes in learning, using, describing, maintaining and preserving the language. Cuyonon participants carried both positive and negative attitudes towards their native language, first and second languages use. To continuously maintain and preserve the Cuyonon language and better determine the relationship of the language use, attitude, and proficiency of the Cuyonon speakers, an in-depth study on a related topic should be conducted using other indicators and measures maintenance and preservations with the linguistic mechanisms like phonology, syntax and semantics the factors and reasons for language shift.

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