



SPEAKING IN LAYERS: SOCIOLECTAL MORPHOLOGY OF HILIGAYNON VISAYAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This study analyzed how gay teachers in the target area creatively form the Hiligaynon Visayan language using their unique style of speaking. It utilized the framework of Parker and Riley, which views language variation and morphology as organized deviation that shows social meaning, the research explored how Hiligaynon words, specifically nouns, verbs, and adjectives, change in word form and usage within the gay community. Through descriptive qualitative approach, thirty commonly utilized words were analyzed to discover patterns of morphological modification. The findings showed that most variations included complete word substitutions instead of affixation, although some featured prefix or suffix changes by adding *-la*, changing *-om* to *-ma*, or replacing *ta-* with *shu-*. These creative linguistic innovations reveal how language becomes a way for identity, creativity, and belonging among a specific sociolect such as the gay community. Further, they highlight that speech is dynamic and is continuously formed by social and cultural interaction. Finally, the study showed that these variations improve and help shape the Hiligaynon language. Respect and greater understanding for the gay sociolect is called upon in this study for inclusivity and better appreciation of variations in language. Further research on the some aspects of Hiligaynon-Visayan language that involves other social groups may be advanced.

Keywords: Language Variation, Sociolect, Morphology, Hiligaynon Visayan Language, Sociolectal Variations.

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Introduction

Languages serve as vital instruments not only for development, intercultural dialogue, and quality education, but also for fostering peace and enabling sustainable national progress. According to UNESCO (2024), they are essential in building inclusive knowledge societies and safeguarding cultural heritage, provided they are used effectively and equitably. However, language can also present barriers to intelligibility and intergroup communication. One causative factor is the variation in linguistic practice among speakers within a speech community, a phenomenon widely examined in sociolinguistics, where sociolectal variations influence how language is understood and interpreted among social groups (Zajda, 2024).

With more than 7,000 islands, the Philippines is home to numerous speech communities, each with a unique linguistic identity. A highly multilingual society has resulted from this geographic and cultural fragmentation; estimates of the number of languages

spoken in the country range from 150 to over 180 (Ethnologue, 2025; Nolasco, 2008). The rich cultural legacy of the Filipino people is reflected in this linguistic diversity, but it also makes cross-regional communication and understanding difficult. Language diversity can promote inclusivity and cultural preservation, as UNESCO (2024) pointed out, but it can also lead to social disintegration and misunderstandings in the absence of efficient frameworks for intergroup communication. Further, we too are surprised to note that at times, linguistic differences occur in terms of phonetics and structure though people in a specific speech community speak the same language. Slight variations are noted such as minor pronunciation of words or trivial changes of grammatical structure which can inhibit intergroup communication. Sometimes, there are also differences between the speech of men and women and different social classes.

Thus, this scientific investigation was conducted in a multi-lingual country such as the Philippines to avoid mis-understanding and for Filipinos to value the thought that no language is superior over the



others. Likewise, the idea that variations in accent and differences in domain of usage of a certain language do not facilitate advancement of one language above the other should be given consideration.

Statement of the Problem

This linguistic investigation analyzed the sociolectal variations of Hiligaynon Visayan in terms of morphology.

Specifically, it focused on the morphologic variations from the original language across such content words as:

1. nouns,
2. verbs, and
3. adjectives.

Theoretical Background

This study demonstrated that morphological variations are evident in the content words of Hiligaynon Visayan as spoken in Bacolod City, diverging from their original forms. Such linguistic shifts are consistent with the framework proposed by Parker and Riley (1994), who defined language variation as the systematic differences in linguistic features observed across distinct speaker groups or within the same speaker across varying contexts.

Rather than comparing entirely separate languages (e.g., English and French), variationist studies focus on intra- language diversity—examining regional dialects (such as English spoken in Mississippi versus Massachusetts), social dialects (e.g., the English of upper-middle-class versus working-class New Yorkers), and stylistic shifts (e.g., formal speech in interviews versus casual conversation among peers) (Parker & Riley, 1994).

Furthermore, this assumption was supported by Parker and Riley's (1991) theoretical framework on morphology, which defines it as the study of word structure and formation. According to their description, words are composed of morphemes—fundamental units of meaning that remain relatively stable in both form and semantic content. This morphological perspective provides a basis for analyzing how linguistic variations manifest in the internal structure of words.

Significance of the Study

This undertaking is deemed significant to the following people:

Other Social Strata. Relevant information acquired from this study may encourage other social groups to understand the lingo of Hiligaynon Visayan gay teachers to avoid mis-communication.

Researcher: This study may deepen the researcher's understanding of morphological variations in Hiligaynon Visayan as spoken in the target city. It may also enhance analytical skills and contributes to sociolinguistic research on Philippine language diversity.

Hiligaynon Gay Teachers. This may help them realize the urge to use their jargon in proper places and occasions to stay away from misunderstanding and misconceptions.

Future Researchers. The study may be of great value to the future researchers for them to be encouraged to conduct further studies about the morphophonemic variations of Hiligaynon Visayan in Bacolod City.

Scope and Limitation

The investigation focused on the sociolectal variations of Hiligaynon Visayan of gay teachers in Bacolod City in terms of morphology and is limited to the morphologic variations of content words as nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

Definition of Terms

Gay. It refers to a person—typically a man—who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to individuals of the same sex. This is likewise used more broadly to describe people of any gender who experience same-sex attraction (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Teachers. Individuals who facilitate learning by guiding, instructing, and supporting students in acquiring knowledge, skills, and values across various subjects and contexts. They play a central role in shaping educational experiences and fostering intellectual and personal development (UNESCO, 2023).

Sociolect. This refers to a variety of language used by a particular social group, characterized by distinct linguistic features that differentiate it from other dialects or sociolects. This denotes a language variety linked to a specific social group, typically characterized by factors including socioeconomic status, educational attainment, occupation, age, or ethnicity. This illustrates the manner in which group members utilize language to convey identity and uphold social boundaries (Trudgill, 2000).

Hiligaynon. Hiligaynon is an Austronesian language utilized by the Hiligaynon people. It bears a close relationship to Cebuano; however, the two are not mutually intelligible. Hiligaynon is frequently categorized as a dialect within the larger Bisayan language group (Rubino, 2000).

Visayan language. The Bisayan languages constitute a subgroup within the Central Philippine branch of the Austronesian language family, including several related languages such as Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray-Waray, among others, spoken in the Visayas and parts of Mindanao (Blust, 2019).

Methodology

Research Design

This research utilized a descriptive qualitative linguistic framework, concentrating on the sociolectal variations in the morphological characteristics of Hiligaynon Visayan content words. The study aimed to document and interpret variations in morphological structures across different social groups within the speech community through systematic observation and analysis.

Sources of Data

The study drew its data from three categories of Hiligaynon Visayan content words—ten nouns, ten verbs, and ten adjectives—each examined in both their original forms and sociolectal variants as spoken in Bacolod City.

Data Generating Process

The following procedures were followed by the linguistic researcher in gathering data for this research investigation:

1. The verbal data were gathered and grouped accordingly following the matrix below.

VARIANTS	ORIGIN	ENGLISH	MORPHOLOGIC VARIATIONS FROM THE STANDARD
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

2. The data were then analysed which included three phases.
- a. Phase 1 – Analysis of the morphologic variations in nouns,
 - b. Phase 2 - Analysis of the morphologic variations in verbs, and
 - c. Phase 3 – Analysis of the morphologic variations in adjectives.

Results and Discussion

On Morphologic Variations in Nouns

The following table presents the observed morphologic variations in Hiligaynon Visayan nouns, highlighting differences between their original forms and sociolectal variants.

Table 1: *Morphologic variations in nouns*

VARIANTS	ORIGIN	ENGLISH	MORPHOLOGIC VARIATIONS FROM THE STANDARD
1. matet	Kawatan	Thief	Word change
2. Teletubis	T.B.	Tuberculosis	Word change
3. Tumba patis	Tomboy	Tomboy	Word change
4. Palalabs	Noby	girlfriend	Word change
5. Gutma	Gutom	hunger	Suffix <u>-OM</u> to <u>-MA</u>
6. Agila	agi	gay	Added a suffix <u>-LA</u>
7. Datis	kwarta	money	Word change
8. Boylet	lalaki	man	Word change
9. Coco Martin	kuko	finger nail	Word change
10. fudash	pagkaon	food	Word change

Table 1 presents the data about the morphologic variations in nouns of Hiligaynon Visayan as spoken by gay teachers in Bacolod City. It reveals that out of ten original nouns of Hiligaynon Visayan, eight words were changed morphologically from the original when spoken by the gay community. There were no bound morphemes added but a total change of words in the variants. On the other hand, the other two words from the original included the change of suffix -OM to -MA and the addition of suffix -LA. This

shows that morphologic variation is evident in Hiligaynon Visayan content word such as noun when spoken by the gay teachers in Bacolod City.

On Morphologic Variations in Verbs

The following section outlines the morphologic variations found in Hiligaynon Visayan verbs, emphasizing changes in form and usage across different social groups in Bacolod City.

Table 2: *Morphologic variations in verbs*

VARIANTS	ORIGIN	ENGLISH	MORPHOLOGIC VARIATIONS FROM THE STANDARD
1. lafang	Kaon	Eat	Word change
2. ratsada	Lagaw	Roam around	Word change
3. nomo	Inom	Drink	Word change
4. dolor	Akig	Scold	Word change
5. burlog	Tulog	Sleep	Prefix <u>TU-</u> to <u>BUR-</u>
6. charity	Hatag	Give	Hiligaynon to English
7. eskerda	Lakat	Go	Word change
8. randabo	Dalagan	Run	Word change
9. singaler	Kanta	Sing	Word change
10. lost-in-emotion	nadula	Lost	Hiligaynon to English

Table 2 shows the data about the morphologic variations in verbs of Hiligaynon Visayan as spoken by gay teachers in Bacolod City. It reveals that out of ten original verbs of Hiligaynon Visayan, seven words were changed morphologically from the original when spoken by the gay sociolect. There were no bound morphemes added but a total change of words in the variants. On the other hand, two words from the original included the change from Hiligaynon Visayan to English terms while one changed its prefix

from TU- to BUR-.This illustrates that morphologic variation is evident in Hiligaynon Visayan content word such as verb when spoken by the gay teachers in Bacolod City.

On Morphologic variations in adjectives

The following section highlights the morphologic variations in Hiligaynon Visayan adjectives, showcasing how their forms shift across different sociolects in Bacolod City.

Table 3: *Morphologic variations in adjectives*

VARIANTS	ORIGIN	ENGLISH	MORPHOLOGIC VARIATIONS FROM THE STANDARD
1. Murcia	Damu	Many	Word change
2. biyaw	Gwapo	Handsome	Word change
3. pekenes	Gamay	Small	Word change
4. shunga	Tanga	Lazy	Prefix <u>TA-</u> to <u>SHU-</u>
5. pigadles	Pigado	Poor	Suffix <u>-O</u> to <u>-LES</u>
6. kaples	Kapoy	Tired	Suffix <u>-OY</u> to <u>-LES</u>
7. iyab	Gwapa	Beautiful	Word change
8. Corazon	Korek	Correct	Word change
9. madatis	Manggaranon	Rich	Word change
10. chaka	Law-ay	Ugly	Word change

Table 3 presents the data about the morphologic variations in adjectives of Hiligaynon Visayan as spoken by gay teachers in Bacolod City. It reveals that out of ten original adjectives of Hiligaynon Visayan, seven words were changed morphologically from the original when spoken by the gay community. There were no bound morphemes added but a total change of words in the variants. On the other hand, the other two words from the original included the change of suffix -O to -LES while the other one changed the prefix TA- to SHU-.This proves that morphologic variation is evident in Hiligaynon Visayan content word such as

adjectives when spoken by the gay teachers in Bacolod City.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study confirms that morphological variations are present in Hiligaynon Visayan content words as spoken in Bacolod City, demonstrating notable deviations from their original forms. These variations reflect the dynamic nature of language shaped by social and regional influences within the speech community.

Recommendations

In view of the aforementioned findings and conclusion the following recommendations are offered:

1. Other social strata who speak the original Hiligaynon Visayan language may understand the jargon of the gay teachers to avoid misunderstanding.
2. Hiligaynon Visayan gay teachers may use their jargon accordingly as to proper place and proper time to keep away from being misinterpreted.
3. Future researchers may continue to aim for more research in order to further the understanding of sociolectal variations of Hiligaynon Visayan in Bacolod City not only in terms of morphology but also phonology.

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