



The Lexical Variations of *Misamisnon Binisaya* in Facebook Posts: An Exploratory Study

Sophomore T. Vacalares^{a*}, *Janrex Bahian*^a, *Frankimae Q. Galula*^a, *Aiza O. Licayan*^a, *Joy Mae Mangcambat*^a, *Sophia Mila*^a

^{a,*}College of Education, Opol Community College, Opol, Misamis Oriental, 9016, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Language is constantly evolving and intimately linked to culture and identity. Across different regions, people speak and use language differently. This study aims to investigate and explore the unique lexical variations of Misamisnon Bisaya speakers as reflected in their Facebook posts. The respondents of this study are Facebook users living in the province of Misamis Oriental. The Facebook posts were filtered and analyzed to examine these lexical variations. The research identifies several distinct features across Misamis Oriental, including (a) the interchangeable use of vowels [u] and [o], (b) the diphthongs [ay] and [ai], (c) the attachment of Bisaya prefixes to English morphemes, and (d) the use of nouns as adjectives. Despite these orthographic variations in the Facebook posts, the meanings of the words remain consistent. The study highlights the need for further exploration into the phonological, morphological, and syntactical features of Misamisnon Bisaya, considering the broader implications for understanding language evolution and cultural identity. Additionally, this research underscores the importance of social media as a valuable resource for linguistic studies, offering insights into contemporary language use and regional linguistic diversity.

Keywords: Lexical Variations, Facebook Post, Misamisnon Binisaya, Orthography.

1. Introduction

Language is a fundamental aspect of human identity and plays an important role in passing knowledge from one generation to the next. Regardless of technological advancements, language evolves alongside the culture it represents. Chomsky (1986, as cited by Galvez, 2018) indeed highlighted a significant feature of the language: it is inherently tied to culture. Each language is systematically unique, with its own methods for arranging signs that convey meaning and for expressing the worldview of its speakers. Therefore, every language serves as an effective tool for capturing and conveying the distinct characteristics of the environment in which its speakers live. This cultural specificity of language underscores its importance in preserving the nuances and complexities of human experience within different communities. Language constantly evolves in response to technological changes, showing its dynamic nature. As societies adopt new technologies, language adapts by adding new concepts and terms (Darvin, 2016). This ongoing interaction between language, culture, and technology highlights the richness of human communication and identity. Understanding this relationship is crucial for appreciating how language reflects and influences our world.

Furthermore, Llamzon (1978) suggests that despite the vast linguistic diversity in the country, this complexity is somewhat mitigated by the fact that over 90 percent of the population speaks one of eight major languages. These major languages—Tagalog, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Bikol, Iloko, Pampango, and Pangasinan—are deemed major, perhaps due to their large number of speakers. The remaining population consists of speakers of "minor languages," many of whom are pagans and Muslims. This linguistic distribution underscores the rich cultural mosaic of the Philippines while also highlighting the dominance of a few key languages in facilitating communication and cultural exchange across the nation (Galvez, 2018). Understanding this linguistic landscape is important for appreciating the intricate interplay between language, culture, and identity in the Philippines.

In Misamis Oriental, Cebuano is the predominant language (Cantular, 2016). It has been observed that the verbal affixation used by the Cagayanons is a distinct and noteworthy phenomenon. While similar usage can be heard in neighboring regions like Misamis Oriental and Camiguin Island, outsiders often attribute this particular usage to Cagayanon Cebuano. Although the variations introduced by the Cagayanons may seem subtle, it is necessary to recognize that suffixes like /á/, /áy/, and /há/ are not part of standard Cebuano morphology and are not commonly used by most Cebuano speakers in the Visayas and Mindanao regions. In these regions, the standard procedure typically involves the use of reduplication or adverbs to transform verbs into a progressive or intensive mood. This linguistic variation sheds light on the rich diversity within the Cebuano language and highlights the cultural nuances that shape regional dialects (Cantular, 2016). Understanding these nuances is key to appreciating the complexity and richness of the Cebuano language across different regions.

In other words, Language can be seen as a unified system of linguistic communication that encompasses a range of mutually intelligible varieties. Llamzon (1978, as cited by Galvez, 2018) noted that all languages display internal variation, meaning each language exists in multiple varieties and collectively represents the sum of these varieties. Wardaugh (2010) defines a language variety as “a set of linguistic items with similar distribution.” This concept of linguistic variation is central to this study. In the case of Misamisnon Binisaya, it is written Facebook timeline post with notable variations, particularly in the manner of writing between District 1 (e.g., Balingasag, Villanueva, Gingoog City, etc.) and District 2 (e.g., Alubijid, Gigatum, Gitagum, etc.). Understanding these differences highlights the rich diversity within the language and underscores the importance of recognizing regional distinctions in linguistic research. This study aims to explore into these variations to appreciate how language evolves and adapts within different communities, reflecting their unique cultural identities.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1 Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed an exploratory research design to investigate the unique lexical features present in the two districts of Misamis Oriental and address the observed linguistic phenomenon. This approach was chosen because the nature of the subject matter does not permit the manipulation of variables by the researcher, nor can the study be conducted in a controlled environment. Additionally, it is challenging to identify all potential influences on the linguistic variations being examined. As Singh (2021) suggests, an exploratory approach is more advantageous in such scenarios, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the topic. This method enables the researcher to uncover new insights and patterns that might not be apparent through more rigid, controlled research designs, thus providing a comprehensive view of the linguistic diversity within the region.

2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were Facebook users residing in various municipalities throughout Misamis Oriental. The researchers focused on comparing the distinct lexical variations between two specific districts, District 1 and District 2. The selection criteria did not include age or gender considerations. Instead, a convenient sampling method was employed, selecting respondents based on their timeline posts on Facebook. By utilizing social media as a platform for gathering data, the study aimed to capture authentic language usage and variations as naturally expressed by the users in their daily online interactions. This approach allowed for a broader and more diverse sample, reflecting the real-world linguistic dynamics within these communities. Additionally, this method ensured that a wide range of lexical features could be observed and analyzed, providing a comprehensive understanding of the regional language variations in Misamis Oriental.

2.3 Data Procedures

This study gathered Facebook timeline posts from the researcher’s Facebook friends residing in various districts within Misamis Oriental. Since these posts were publicly available, explicit consent may not be necessary. According to Moreau et al. (2022), explicit consent is not always required, particularly if the study results are presented in an aggregated form, ensuring that individual data is not disclosed outside its original context. This implies that as long as the individual data remains confidential and is not shared beyond its original setting, explicit consent may not be necessary. Following the data collection, the researchers meticulously analyzed the lexical features of the posts and interpreted the data accordingly. Furthermore, the researchers ensured that the data was handled with the utmost confidentiality, respecting the privacy of the individuals involved. This approach allowed the researchers to gain valuable insights while maintaining ethical standards and protecting the participants' privacy.

3. Results and Discussions

The analyses presented in this study stem from the unique challenges and successes encountered during linguistic work and language documentation sourced from Facebook posts. This research specifically focuses on identifying Misamisnon Binisaya linguistic features from Facebook users in District 1 (Balingasag, Villanueva, Gingoog City, etc.) and District 2 (Opol, Gitagum, Alubijid, El Salvador City, etc.). By examining public posts, the study aims to capture authentic language use and uncover distinct lexical variations across these regions. This approach not only highlights the rich linguistic diversity within Misamis Oriental but also underscores the value of social media as a tool for contemporary language research.

3.1 Vowels [u] and [o]

In District 1, Facebook users frequently employed the vowel [u], in contrast to Facebook users in some areas in District 2, who predominantly used the vowel [o]. For instance, the word ‘*hapon*’ appeared as [hapun] in posts from FB users from District 1, whereas it remained [hapon] in District 2. This lexical variation is obviously different between Facebook users residing in the two major cities of Misamis Oriental, namely Gingoog City and El Salvador City. Such differences highlight the distinct linguistic characteristics that can be observed in the province, showcasing how even minor phonetic variations can signify broader regional linguistic identities. Additionally, these variations reflect the dynamic nature of language and how regional influences can shape communication patterns on social media platforms.



Figure 1. Lexical Variation of *Hapon* or *Hapun* in the Facebook Post

The Misamisnon Binisaya vowel [u] can be pronounced as either /u/ or /o/. When pronounced, the lips are closer together and less rounded than in Spanish /u/ or English /o/, similar to Cebuano. This interchangeable use of /u/ and /o/ shows the flexibility in the Misamisnon Binisaya language and highlights regional phonetic variations. Understanding these differences is important for studying and teaching Philippine languages, as it helps accommodate these local variations.

Similarly, Rodolfo Cabonce (1983), in his Cebuano Dictionary, explained when the sounds [u] and [ɔ] (written as 'u') and [ɔ] (written as 'o') are used. Typically, [u] or [ɔ] appear: (1) in the first and middle syllables; (2) in closed syllables before b, p, m; (3) before stressed t, d, and s; (4) in repeated syllables (e.g., kubkub, supsup) before b, m, p, k, g, l, d, s, t, and y; and (5) in syllables with adjacent vowels (e.g., luub, luuk) before b, m, p, k, g, l, d, s, and t. Even though the vowels look adjacent in writing, a glottal stop comes before the second vowel when spoken.



Figure 2. Lexical Variety of *kaun* and *kaon* across Districts

3.2 Diphthong [ay] to [ai]

It is clear that the use of the diphthong [ay] varies between the two districts, often being used interchangeably with [i] in writing. Among Bisaya speakers, the vowel sound /ay/ is frequently pronounced as /i/, and Misamisnon speakers may either translate it or keep the original spelling. For example, the words [gamay] and [gamai], as well as [balay] and [balai], illustrate this variation. Additionally, these differences highlight the dynamic nature of language within different regions and the importance of understanding local linguistic practices for effective communication and cultural appreciation.



Figure 3. Deviation from the Diphthong /ay/ to /ai/

Generally, the diphthongs present in the Binisaya language include /ay, uy, iw, and aw/ (Bunye & Yap, 1971). A diphthong is characterized by a vowel sound that is immediately followed by either /y/ or /w/ within the same syllable. These combinations create a gliding vowel sound that contributes to the phonetic richness of Binisaya, allowing for more nuanced expression and variation in speech. However, there are instances that they deviate from the /ay/ diphthongs to /ai/ across the districts.

3.3 Bisaya Prefixes Attached to English Words

In the linguistic landscape of Misamis Oriental, Millennials and Gen Zers often attach Bisaya prefixes to English words (i.e., free morphemes). Borello (2018) suggests that these prefixes are added to the base form of a word to create new meanings or entirely new words. In Bisaya, affixation is a common process that occurs with nouns, adjectives, and verbs (Bunye & Yap, 1971; Sieras, 2020). This process alters the meaning and context of the original word depending on the affix used, indicating whether the action is *realis* (completed or performed) or *irrealis* (conceptual or intended). This linguistic phenomenon highlights the dynamic interplay between English and Bisaya, reflecting the adaptability and creativity of language use among younger generations. For example:



Figure 4. Bisaya Affixes Attached to the English Free Morphemes

The Bisaya prefixes [mag-] and [nag-] impart distinct meanings when attached to free morphemes. The prefix [mag-] conveys an irrealis concept, indicating that the action has not yet been performed and remains a concept. For example, [mag-drive] means the action of driving will occur in the future. In contrast, the prefix [nag-] signifies that the action has already been completed, as in [nag-sleep], meaning the action of sleeping has already taken place. This distinction is consistent with the findings of Sieras (2020), who noted that the prefix [mag-] informs the listener or reader that the action is intended to occur soon. This demonstrates the nuanced way in which Bisaya speakers use prefixes to convey time and aspect in their verbs, reflecting a sophisticated understanding of temporal context in everyday language.

Consequently, Bisaya Misamisnon speakers often attach these affixes to verbs to indicate present or future actions. Sieras (2020) highlights that understanding how words change with added morphemes is essential for the listener, as it helps in learning correct word formation and understanding possible morpheme combinations. This ability to interpret the meaning and timing of actions through affixation enhances linguistic skills and improves communication.

3.4 Use Nouns as Adjectives

In Philippine languages, Filipino speakers frequently use nouns as adjectives to describe states of being. This practice is particularly evident when medical terms are employed to illustrate a speaker's condition. For instance, the noun "nosebleed," which medically refers to bleeding from the nose due to ruptured blood vessels, is repurposed by Bisaya Misamisnon speakers. On their Facebook posts, they use "nosebleed" to humorously describe the difficulty of comprehending someone who speaks English fluently. This creative linguistic adaptation reflects the unique way Filipinos blend everyday language with specialized jargon to convey their experiences and emotions. It highlights the dynamic nature of language and the cultural nuances that shape its evolution, particularly in the context of social media interactions among Millennials and Gen Zers in Misamis Oriental. This trend also underscores the influence of bilingualism in the Philippines, where English and native languages interact fluidly, resulting in innovative expressions that enrich communication and cultural identity. See the screenshots below:



Figure 5. Using Noun Words as Adjectives

Similarly, the term "high blood," which traditionally refers to hypertension, is colloquially used to describe someone who is upset or angry. Another term, "killjoy," is used to refer to someone who spoils the joy or pleasure of others, either by their behavior or by not participating in well-planned activities. These adaptations of medical and descriptive terms into everyday language illustrate the creativity and expressiveness of Filipino speakers.

Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of morphological awareness in language learning, allowing speakers to use their language more precisely and clearly. This skill is particularly valuable in a dynamic linguistic environment where native and foreign elements frequently mix, showing the evolving nature of language use among Millennials and Gen Zers in Misamis Oriental.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The distinctive linguistic landscape of Misamis Oriental is prominently displayed on Facebook posts. Users often incorporate Bisaya words in various forms, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This phenomenon prompted researchers to investigate the lexical variations in Misamis Bisaya orthography on Facebook. The study revealed that Misamis Oriental, encompassing both District 1 and District 2, exhibits unique lexical variations among its Facebook users. One notable finding is the interchangeable use of the vowels /u/ and /o/. In Bisaya, which has only three vowels (/a/, /i/, /u/), these two vowels can be pronounced similarly, leading many users to use them interchangeably in written form. Another significant lexical variation is the use of diphthongs, specifically /ay/ and /ai/. Misamis Facebook users sometimes change /ay/ to /ai/, such as [gamay] to [gamai] and [balay] to [balai], both of which convey the same meaning but differ orthographically. Additionally, the study identified the unique use of affixes attached to English morphemes as a key lexical feature of Bisaya. The prefix [mag-] added to an English morpheme indicates an *irrealis* mood, meaning the action is still in the mind, while the prefix [nag-] signifies a *realis* mood, indicating the action is completed or ongoing. Lastly, the use of nouns as adjectives is another common lexical feature. Medical terms are frequently used in their discourse by Misamis Bisaya speakers to describe their emotions, showcasing a creative linguistic adaptation in everyday communication. This study highlights the rich and dynamic linguistic diversity present in Misamis Oriental's online interactions.

This study recommends further investigation and exploration of other unique linguistic features of the Misamis Binisaya, particularly on phonology, morphology, and syntax. An in-depth analysis of phonological aspects could uncover distinctive sound patterns and pronunciation tendencies, while a morphological study might reveal more about the structure and formation of words. Additionally, examining syntactic structures could provide insights into sentence construction and the interplay between different grammatical components in Misamis Binisaya. Such comprehensive research would contribute to a deeper understanding of the linguistic intricacies of this vibrant regional language, enriching both academic scholarship and practical applications in language education and preservation.

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