

Crossing the Barrier: Exploring Hiligaynon Speaking Students' Cebuano Vocabulary Proficiency

Josephine Asuncion R. Emoy^{1*}

¹Central Philippines State University, Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental, Philippines
Corresponding Author e-mail: josephineasuncionemoy@gmail.com

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Abstract

Aim: Cebuano proficiency is the ability to use a language in real world situations during spontaneous interactions or in a non-rehearsed context in a way that is appropriate and acceptable for native speakers of the language. In order for someone to demonstrate Cebuano proficiency, the user must be able to speak the language regardless of where, when, or how the language was learned. Cebuano proficiency is independent of how a language was acquired. A person should be able to demonstrate proficiency regardless if the context is familiar or not.

Hence, this study generally aimed to identify the level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency of Hiligaynon speaking college students of Central Philippines State University (CPSU), and if there was any significant difference on respondents' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency when grouped according to sex.

Methodology: This was a descriptive survey research conducted to 200 Hiligaynon speaking students of CPSU - main campus utilizing a validated self-made questionnaire which obtained a validity index of 3.50 and a reliability result of .80 using Cronbach's alpha, thus proving it to be valid and reliable for the study. Statistical tools used were Mean and t-test.

Results: Findings revealed that there was no significant difference on the Cebuano vocabulary proficiency of Hiligaynon speaking students when grouped according to sex. Respondents were also found to have high Cebuano vocabulary proficiency.

Conclusion: In light of the results shed from the study, it was concluded that despite differences in language, respondents were highly proficient with the Cebuano vocabulary in terms of common Cebuano expressions, synonyms and antonyms, and as a whole proving that they were linguistically versatile and capable of adjusting to their fellow Cebuano students' language since they interacted with them in their activities and conversations in and even outside classes.

Keywords: Bilingual education, Cebuano vocabulary, Hiligaynon vocabulary, language barrier, language proficiency

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines owns a great wealth of languages, and while these languages are related, the differences among them are also extensive. Languages are very diverse, exhibiting differences in all linguistic aspects: lexicon, phonology, syntax (Quijano, 2015) that makes their vocabulary unique.

In the academic setting where students often engage in discussions and sharing of ideas inside or outside the classroom, it is important for them to effectively understand each other through the use of conventional vocabulary words that are common to them. If students fail to establish strong vocabulary that should enable them to recognize and use words in various contexts, like speaking and writing, comprehension and effective communication would be hard to achieve (Cyparsade et al., 2015).

This would be further hampered if communicators use different languages not familiar to the other that would most often lead to miscommunication and loss of interest to put an effort of engaging in any conversations with fellow students. Once this happens, academic performance may be affected especially if they are required to do group tasks and other collaborative activities in classroom (Hallberg, 2010 & Kocaman, 2016).

This is oftentimes the scenario observed by the researcher in CPSU main campus, being situated in the boundary of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental where language vocabulary seems to serve as a barrier between the two regions. Located just 19 kilometers from Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental and 17 kilometers from the town of Mabinay, Negros Oriental, the students of the University are a mixture of these two linguistically different communities, the Hiligaynon speakers and the Cebuano speakers. In the classroom, the language barrier among students is inevitable that others even tend to avoid engaging in conversations or joining in discussion in fear of being misinterpreted or laughed at because of their vocabulary differences. This now hampers or curtails possible synergies and good interpersonal relationship especially during tasks and other activities required by the teacher that if not addressed, may eventually affect their studies and academic performance, in general (Duță, 2015).

It was for this reason that this study was conducted in order to identify the Hiligaynon speaking students' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency, and suggest strategies and schemes for students, teachers and even the school administration to plan out ways for students to overcome such obstacle and be able to engage effectively in any class activities and tasks regardless of language vocabulary that their fellow students use.

Objective

This study aimed to identify the Cebuano proficiency of Hiligaynon speaking students of Central Philippines State University.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What was the level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency of Hiligaynon speaking college students in terms of common Cebuano expressions, synonyms and antonyms, and as a whole?
2. Was there any significant difference on respondents' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency when grouped according to sex?

Theoretical Background

The study finds support from Vygotsky's Social Interactionist Theory whose central concern was how language is used for interaction. According to him, language, culture and society play essential roles both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world. He was interested in the ways in which different languages might impact on how a person thinks. Vygotsky's theory views language first in the social communication, gradually promoting both language itself and cognition. By explaining human language development, his theory serves as a strong foundation of the modern trends in applied linguistic. It lends support to less structured and more natural communicative and experiential approaches and points to the importance of early real human interaction in diverse language learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

METHODS

Research Design

Considering the purpose of the investigation, the descriptive survey research was utilized to gain accurate and in-depth data pertinent to the study. Since this method of research focuses on the present phenomena particularly on aspects such as conditions, practices, beliefs, processes, relationships or trends, it does not simply involve gathering and tabulating data but includes proper analyses, interpretation, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships. It dwells further than just the characteristics of individuals but with the characteristics of the whole sample thereof. More significantly, with the data gathered, it paves access to pertinent information useful to the solutions of local matters and/or problems. This design primarily follows the scientific method by cautiously analyzing and examining the source materials, by analyzing and interpreting data, and by arriving at generalization and prediction (Salaria, 2012). With the set of objectives in the study, such design was considered appropriate to be used for its primary concern which aimed to identify Hiligaynon speaking students' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency.

Population and Sampling

The respondents of this study were all the students of Central Philippines State University (CPSU) – main campus whose first language was Hiligaynon. They were identified through their home addresses accessed through the registrar's and college dean's offices. From the total number of identified respondents, only a sample size of 200 students was drawn using the Slovin's formula. Then, the researcher stratified the sample population to its main groupings in terms of their sex. In which case, proportional allocation was used to generate the exact sample of both male and female respondents. Finally, random sampling technique was utilized to get the actual students who participated in the study.

Instrumentation

For the purpose of accurately gathering the pertinent data for the study, a validated researcher-made survey instrument was used which consisted of two parts. The first part was the respondents' profile in terms sex. Second part was a multiple choice type with a total of 30 items, which aimed to determine respondents' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency in terms of Common Cebuano Expressions (10 items), Synonyms (10 items) and Antonyms (10 items) that were often used by the respondents in the academic setting.

In the manner of responding the items, for the Common Cebuano Expressions, respondents were asked to choose the correct English meaning of the italicized Cebuano vocabulary from the options provided in the instrument. Meanwhile, for the Synonyms, they would have to choose the correct Cebuano synonym of the Cebuano underlined word based on the options provided. Lastly, for the Antonyms the respondents would choose from the options the Cebuano antonym of the underlined Cebuano vocabulary.

Ethical Consideration

Several ethical considerations were given prime concern in the collection of data. Identity of the respondents were concealed, they were not forced to indicate their names, and it was made clear to them from the start that the study was voluntary. The purpose of the study was likewise explained to them. Whatever information they provided were kept with utmost confidentiality and were only used for the purpose of the study. Should the respondents refuse to participate in the survey, the researcher did not coerce them in any way.

Data Collection

Before administering the questionnaire, it was necessary that the confidence on its usefulness and appropriateness was established by having it undergo validity and reliability testing so as to make sure that it would measure what it was designed to measure. With the expertise of three English jurors who evaluated the instrument, it obtained a validity index of 3.50, while its reliability result using Cronbach's alpha was .80, thus proving it to be highly valid and reliable for the study.

Prior to the actual conduct, the researcher followed the University research protocols and sought approval from authorities. Once approved, another communication was sent to the respective deans per College asking for permission to conduct the study to their students. Once approved, data collection started. Specifically, the researcher elucidated to the respondents the purpose of the study. The researcher identified the first few Hiligaynon speaking respondents, then sought their help to locate/identify other Hiligaynon speaking students in the University until the desired number of respondents was met. Retrieval of questionnaires was done right after being administered and were kept with utmost confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using appropriate statistical tools so as to answer each research question accurately. Frequency count was used to determine the respondents' demographic profile by sex. Meanwhile, mean was used for the respondents' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency. Finally, t-test was employed to determine significant difference on the respondents' level of proficiency in Cebuano when grouped according to sex.

Below is the interpretive scale for respondents' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency.

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Description</i>
71 – 100	High Proficiency	Well advanced and very skilled in the use of the Cebuano vocabulary
36 – 70	Average Proficiency	Intermediate level with limited knowledge on the use of the Cebuano vocabulary
0 – 35	Low Proficiency	Very limited knowledge and poor use of the Cebuano vocabulary

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

On the level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency of Hiligaynon speaking students in terms of Common Cebuano Expressions

Table 1-A. Level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency in terms of Common Cebuano Expressions

Common Cebuano Expressions	Frequency	Percentage
● <i>Nalimut</i>	200	100
● <i>Kahinumdum</i>	194	97
● <i>Sayun</i>	193	96
● <i>Makalagut</i>	109	54.5
● <i>Unsa</i>	143	71.5
● <i>Kadiyut</i>	173	86.5

Result showed that in terms of Common Cebuano Expressions, the vocabulary word with the highest percentage of correct responses was "Nalimut" (forgot) with 100% score. This was followed by "Kahinumdum" (remember) with 97%, and lastly, "Sayon" (easy) came third with 96% correct answers. Their meanings were easily and immediately identified by the respondents making them highly proficient with such Cebuano terms.

However, the word that obtained the least percentage of correct responses was "Makalagut" (infuriating) with only 54.5% correct responses. This was followed by "Unsa" (what) with 71.5%, and "Kadiyut" (brief/short) with 86.5%. Respondents were unfamiliar especially with the Cebuano term "Makalagut" wherein they obtained average proficiency level.

This may be so since, In Central Philippines State University, Hiligaynon speaking students are expected to interact and communicate most of the times with their Cebuano classmates, schoolmates, friends and even teachers. Hence, their proficiency of the Cebuano language becomes a crucial and significant part of their learning.

When surveyed of their level of proficiency on Common Cebuano Expressions, results implied that most of the Hiligaynon speaking students were very knowledgeable and proficient especially with the Cebuano vocabulary word "nalimut" (forgot), which is equivalent to "nalipat" in Hiligaynon vocabulary since they all got correct answers. This may be attributed to the fact that they very often hear this word being spoken by their Cebuano speaking classmates especially when talking about forgetting the output deadlines, assignments, instructions, and the like.

Meanwhile, the Cebuano vocabulary "makalagut" (infuriating), which is equivalent to "kailinit" in Hiligaynon vocabulary, was the least word that Hiligaynon speakers were knowledgeable of. This may be attributed to the fact that this vocabulary is seldom spoken by their Cebuano classmates. They try to avoid or suppress themselves from saying it since this is an unfriendly, offensive, discordant remark with a very negative denotation

On the level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency of Hiligaynon speaking students in terms of Synonyms

Table 1-B. level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency in terms of Synonyms

Synonyms	Frequency	Percentage
● <i>Kuyug</i>	193	96.5
● <i>Muabut</i>	191	95.5
● <i>Nasuku</i>	190	95
● <i>Paanhion</i>	140	70
● <i>Kasabut</i>	152	76
● <i>Dili</i>	173	86.5

Moreover, in terms of Synonyms, the Cebuano vocabulary word that obtained the highest percentage of correct responses was "kuyug" (join) with 96.5% correct answers. The synonym for the word is "uban" which is equivalent to "upod" in Hiligaynon. This was followed by "muabut" (arrive) with 95.5% correct responses. Its synonym is equivalent to "magkadto/mag-abot" in Hiligaynon.

Finally, the third highest was "Nasuku" (angry) with 95%. The correct synonym for the word "nasuku" is "nangisog" which is equivalent to "nangakig" in Hiligaynon. Hence, respondents were highly proficient and had immediately identified the equivalent terms or synonyms of such words revealing that they were very skilled in their use.

On the other hand, the Cebuano word that had the least percentage of correct responses was "paanhion" (come) with only 70% correct answers where respondents only obtained an average proficiency. This was followed by the terms "kasabut" (understand) with 76% and "Dili" (no/not) with 86.5% correct responses.

From this result, it is implied that in terms of their proficiency on the synonyms of Cebuano vocabulary, respondents were knowledgeable with Cebuano synonyms especially for the Cebuano vocabulary words "kuyug" (join), "muabut" (arrive) and "nasuku" (angry), respectively because whenever they were given tasks to do in class, these were oftentimes the words uttered by their Cebuano speaking classmates.

However, for the term "Paanhion" with the least number of correct responses, this result may be due to the reason that they were really unfamiliar with such word since they seldom hear it from their Cebuano classmates. Also, it had no particular sound association to its Hiligaynon equivalent, unlike the other words which somehow had sound association or similarity with its Hiligaynon counterpart.

On the level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency of Hiligaynon speaking students in terms of Antonyms

Table 1-C. Level of Cebuano vocabulary proficiency in terms of Antonyms

Antonyms	Frequency	Percentage
● Tsada	193	97
● Mulakaw	192	96
● Hilumun	191	95.5
● Puhun	137	68.5
● Karun	175	87.5
● Duul	177	88.5

Finally, for the Antonyms, the Cebuano vocabulary word that had the highest percentage of correct responses was "tsada" (nice or pretty) with 97%. Its antonym is "bati" (unappealing, unpleasant or ugly). Second was the word "Mulakaw" (leave) with 96%. The antonym of this word is "mupundo" (stay). The third was the word "Hilumun" (quiet) with 94%. Its antonym is "sabaan" (noisy). This shows that respondents were very knowledgeable, familiar and highly proficient with the antonyms of the said words that they were able to immediately identify the correct answers.

Meanwhile, the word with the least percentage of correct responses was "Puhun" (someday/hopefully) with 68.5%. This Cebuano term had no word association nor similarity at all in Hiligaynon term which made it somehow unfamiliar, confusing and unusual for the Hiligaynon speakers. Hence, they only had average proficiency of it.

This was followed by the Cebuano terms "Karun" with 67.5% and "Duol" with 88.5%, both still considered as highly proficient.

This implied that, on the antonyms of Cebuano words, respondents showed that they were also highly proficient based on the results which simply implied that they could also understand and identify the opposite meanings of most Cebuano terms like "tsada", "mulakaw" and "hilumun" since, when conversing with Cebuano speakers, these were the words that were most commonly used by their Cebuano classmates, schoolmates and even teachers. Constant exposure to such words served as means for the Hiligaynon speakers to learn the terms.

While for the least responded Cebuano word "puhun," this may perhaps be due to the fact that the term is only unique to the Cebuano language with no accurate equivalent in the Hiligaynon term. Also, the etymological and phonological pattern of the word may seem very peculiar and bizarre to the Hiligaynon speakers that they could not easily familiarize it.

On the Hiligaynon speaking students' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency as a whole

Table 1-D. Hiligaynon speaking students' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency as a whole

CEBUANO VOCABULARY PROFICIENCY	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	INTERPRETATION
Common Cebuano Expression	88.15	11.73	High Proficiency
Synonyms	88.85	10.71	High Proficiency
Antonyms	90.45	10.43	High Proficiency
Over-all	89.15	6.09	High Proficiency

As a whole, respondents obtained High Proficiency in Common Cebuano Expressions, Synonyms and Antonyms with an overall mean of 89.15 interpreted as High Proficiency.

More particularly, it revealed that in all three categories, such as the Common Cebuano Expressions (with a mean of 88.15), Synonyms (with a mean of 88.85) and Antonyms (with a mean of 90.45), respondents were highly knowledgeable, skillful and competent on the use of the Cebuano terms, as reflected in the overall mean of 89.15 which were all interpreted as High Proficiency.

When taken as a whole, results led to the implication that Hiligaynon speaking students were impressively proficient, knowledgeable and skillful with the Cebuano vocabulary and their use. This is perhaps due to the fact that students at this age and stage in life could easily adapt and learn other languages especially that they come in regular contact with the speakers of the Cebuano language, hence, it would be easy for them to acquire and

understand their language through their constant interaction with the Cebuano speakers. Also, it could not be denied that prior to their study in CPSU, they may have already encountered Cebuano speakers – teachers, classmates, friends or acquaintances – during their years in elementary and secondary education where they might have first encountered and learned the Cebuano language. Furthermore, since they interact with their Cebuano classmates mostly in class, they become interested to learn the language which come in handy since learners at this stage are very versatile and are very much capable of learning other languages.

This is in conformity with the Critical Age Hypothesis in language learning stating that the most effective age for a person to learn another language aside from its native tongue where the brain is at its most active is the adolescence stage or 12 to 18 years old (Yule, 2014)

Significant Difference on Respondents' Cebuano Vocabulary Proficiency when Grouped According to Sex

Table 2. On respondents' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency when grouped according to sex

PROFILE	STATISTICAL TOOL	P-VALUE	DECISION FOR H_0	CONCLUSION
Sex	T-TEST	.061	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant

Reject H_0 if P-Value is less than 0.05 level of significance

Accept H_0 if P-Value is greater than 0.05 level of significance

When grouped according to sex, the p-value was .061 greater than the 0.05 level of significance leading to the conclusion that there was no significant difference on respondents' Cebuano vocabulary proficiency when grouped according to sex.

This result implied that regardless of whether male or female, respondents had the same vocabulary proficiency. Since both sexes were highly proficient with the Cebuano vocabulary, it could be implied the crucial contributory factor to this result is the fact that both males and females had Cebuano speaking classmates and friends who became instrumental for them to learn and understand the Cebuano language easily. Their regular contact with their Cebuano classmates, schoolmates, peers and even teachers may have been helpful for them to become familiar with the Cebuano vocabulary.

On the contrary, as averred by Bateman (2018), lexical differences in languages are factors that can cause semantic and pragmatic issues, especially that several lexemes are found to be common in both languages however they carry different meanings, which can clearly cause ambiguity to the non-native speakers. Similarly, according to

This is further supported by Mandane (2014), saying that since languages carry different versions in their dialects with huge likeness from their linguistic origin (L1), the challenge comes when they are mixed with policies like those in the education system. This is when linguistic issues will brew. In fact, according to Smith (2015) even those who speak the same language experience still experience dialectal differences which can greatly hinder lucid communication.

This result somehow contradicts to the statement of Fasold et al., (2014) that females are at a more advantaged level in learning strategy use, positive attitude towards learning a different language, and more observation of turn-taking rules. Further, in terms of speech, females often give much attention to correctly pronouncing words than males; and in the stretch of discourse, females seem to be more cooperative than interruptive (Baker & Hengeveld, 2012).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it delineates how language, being a primary tool for interaction and communication per se, is influenced by and influences culture as meanings are created by people who use it, and not in words. This further creates ripples as it scopes how humans perceive the society and the world in the bigger picture.

More specifically, respondents were highly proficient, knowledgeable and skillful with the Cebuano vocabulary in terms of common Cebuano expressions, synonyms and antonyms, and as a whole proving that they were linguistically versatile and capable of adjusting to their fellow Cebuano students' language since they interacted with them in their everyday activities and conversations in and even outside class.

Both male and female respondents did not differ in terms of their proficiency in Cebuano vocabulary proving that sex is not a determining factor on how a person could effectively learn and understand new language vocabulary.

Environment, peers and age are the crucial determining factors that have significant impact in their acquisition of another language, in this case, the Cebuano language. Considering their high ability to effectively acquire a new language due to exposure with Cebuano speaking friends, along with the frequency of its use with peers, learning the vocabulary of the Cebuano language became convenient for them. Though learning was mostly in the informal setting, but it was proven effective as it was used in their daily interaction in and outside their classes.

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