



## Lexical Convergence and Semantic Variation between Cebuano and Hiligaynon: Evidence from Scripted Spoken Discourse in the Philippines

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### Abstract

This study examines lexical convergence and semantic variation between Cebuano and Hiligaynon in the Philippines, focusing on shared terminologies in scripted spoken discourse. Despite their close geographical and cultural proximity, few studies have systematically explored how these languages converge and diverge in vocabulary and meaning in context. The corpus consisted of recorded radio dramas from DYHB RMN Bacolod and DYHP RMN Cebu, specifically *Handumanan sa Isa ka Ambalahon* and *Handumanan sa Usa ka Awit*. Terminologies were collected through manual qualitative coding using a researcher-developed tally sheet and validated by expert native speakers to ensure analytical trustworthiness. Guided by descriptive, qualitative content analysis and structural analysis within an established qualitative discourse-analytic and translation studies framework, the study examined semantic nuances and grammatical function, stress patterns, and contextual use of shared lexical items. Findings indicate significant yet non-uniform lexical convergence, with some terms exhibiting parallel meanings across both languages while others show semantic variation influenced by grammatical function, stress patterns, and discourse context. These results suggest that, although Cebuano and Hiligaynon share a linguistic heritage, shared lexical forms do not always yield equivalent meanings. By foregrounding meaning-in-use in scripted spoken discourse, the study extends prior qualitative and discourse-based analyses of Philippine languages, contributing to a deeper understanding of lexical convergence and semantic variation, and offering theory-informed implications for multilingual education, instructional material development, and effective communication in linguistically diverse contexts.

**Keywords:** *Lexical Convergence, Semantic Variation, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Scripted Spoken Discourse, Grammatical Function, Meaning-In-Use, Philippine Languages*

### INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 7,159 living languages worldwide, with the Philippines alone accounting for 185 ([Ethnologue, n.d.](#)). Each language is unique, yet languages often share historical, cultural, or social factors that trace their development and interrelatedness.

Cebuano and Filipino, the latter primarily based on Tagalog, serve as prominent examples of widely spoken languages in the Philippines, while numerous other local languages, such as Hiligaynon, spoken in about 7.3% of households nationwide, continue to maintain extensive use ([Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023](#)). Linguistic studies suggest that as communities become geographically separated, their dialects gradually diverge and may eventually develop into distinct languages, a process known as isolation by distance ([Huisman, Majid, & van Hout, 2019](#)). This explains why some Philippine languages, such as Cebuano and Hiligaynon, are genealogically related yet develop distinct vocabularies and structures. While many terms are shared between these languages, certain words differ in meaning, highlighting the relevance of linguistic relativity in understanding semantic and functional divergence.

Previous qualitative and discourse-based studies on Philippine languages have examined lexical convergence and semantic variation in written texts and structured elicitation tasks (e.g.,

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Ciruela, 2024; Maxilom, 2017; Rentillo, 2025). However, what remains insufficiently explored is how shared lexical items function in meaning-in-use when examined through qualitative, discourse-based analysis of spoken data, particularly naturalistic or semi-naturalistic genres such as radio dramas. Consequently, there is limited qualitative understanding of how lexical convergence and semantic variation manifest in closely related Philippine languages within contextualized spoken discourse, leaving a gap in existing linguistic literature.

Responding to this gap, and consistent with qualitative research traditions that emphasize theory-building through in-depth contextual analysis, this study examines lexical convergence and semantic variation between Cebuano and Hiligaynon through the analysis of shared terminologies in scripted spoken discourse, specifically regional radio dramas. Selected terms were collected and validated by expert native speakers to ensure accurate interpretation and analytical trustworthiness. Guided by a meaning-in-use perspective, the study seeks to: (1) identify and describe shared lexical items across Cebuano and Hiligaynon radio drama corpora; (2) examine how stress patterns, grammatical function, and discourse context contribute to semantic variation; and (3) advance theoretical understanding of lexical convergence and semantic variation in closely related Philippine languages through qualitative discourse analysis.

By situating the study within qualitative, discourse-based frameworks and focusing on scripted spoken discourse as a semi-naturalistic communicative genre, this research not only documents linguistic convergence and divergence but also contributes to theory-building on semantic variation in related languages, while offering practical implications for multilingual education, cultural preservation, and effective communication in linguistically diverse social contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Human language is a complex system used to convey meaning, express thought, and communicate cultural values. Aristotle emphasized the social nature of language, noting that human speech is unique, articulated, and influenced by social context (Qiu, 2014), whereas Chomsky highlights the mental faculty of language, focusing on syntactic structures (Chomsky, 1970). While Aristotle foregrounds semantics and social interaction, Chomsky emphasizes formal structure, illustrating the dual importance of meaning and form in understanding human communication. This tension between structure and function remains relevant when analyzing lexical convergence and semantic variation in closely related languages, where similar forms may diverge in meaning depending on context.

Semantics, the study of meaning in language, has long been central in linguistic inquiry. Lyons (1995) defines it as the systematic study of meaning and interpretation in context, while Hockett (1960) emphasizes that language is socially and culturally transmitted. Harris (1951, cited by Goldsmith, 2005) similarly views meaning as a socially shared and conventional pattern rather than purely individual cognition. These perspectives converge on the role of context but differ in emphasis: some prioritize social transmission, others cognitive processing, highlighting the need to examine meaning-in-use in authentic communicative settings. This theoretical lens directly informs the study's focus on interpreting how Cebuano and Hiligaynon shared terms function within scripted spoken discourse.

Language structure enables speakers to generate infinite expressions from finite units, a phenomenon known as duality of patterning (Hockett, 1960). Syntax allows morphemes to combine into complex utterances, supporting the emergence of semantic variation. Prior research on syntax often focuses on formal sentence structures, while studies on meaning emphasize contextual interpretation. In this study, the analysis of stress patterns, grammatical function, and discourse context provides a framework for understanding how shared terminologies converge structurally

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while diverging semantically. This alignment ensures that the qualitative content analysis captures both the formal properties and contextual meanings of words, bridging structural and functional perspectives.

Language evolves through contact, migration, and social differentiation, resulting in lexical borrowing and structural change (Lucy, 2016). Multilingual competence, family language policies, and sociolinguistic norms influence vocabulary and syntax (Pagé & Noels, 2024; Tyborowska et al., 2024). Cognitive and sociolinguistic research shows that shared lexical items may converge in form yet diverge in meaning, reflecting historical, cultural, and pragmatic factors (Kemmerer, 2023; Masullo et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024; Coulter et al., 2024). These findings support the study's focus on meaning-in-use, stress patterns, and grammatical function as key dimensions for interpreting lexical convergence in Cebuano and Hiligaynon.

Previous studies on Philippine languages have examined lexical convergence and semantic variation, but many rely on written texts or structured elicitation (Ciruela, 2024; Maxilom, 2017; Rentillo, 2025). By contrast, few studies analyze naturalistic or semi-naturalistic spoken data, such as radio dramas, leaving a gap in understanding how convergence and divergence operate in authentic oral communication. This study extends prior research by systematically examining shared terminologies in scripted spoken discourse, demonstrating how stress patterns, grammatical function, and discourse context shape semantic variation. Compared to Ciruela (2024) and Maxilom (2017), who focused on formal written forms, the present study foregrounds lexical meaning in context, contributing a meaning-in-use perspective to the analysis of Philippine languages.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that understanding lexical convergence and semantic variation requires integrating structural, semantic, and sociocultural perspectives. The present study builds on this foundation by explicitly connecting theoretical insights from semantics, grammatical function, and discourse analysis to the qualitative examination of Cebuano and Hiligaynon shared terms. In doing so, it advances theory on meaning-in-use in closely related Philippine languages and offers practical implications for multilingual education, cultural preservation, and effective communication, thereby bridging gaps between prior research and the analysis of authentic spoken discourse.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed an exploratory–descriptive qualitative research design, grounded in descriptive and interpretive approaches, to examine lexical convergence and semantic variation between the Cebuano and Hiligaynon languages. The study focused on identifying shared lexical items, analyzing their semantic nuances, and examining their functional use within scripted spoken discourse. This design is appropriate for addressing the study's aim of advancing qualitative understanding of meaning-in-use in closely related Philippine languages rather than measuring frequency or statistical association.

The primary data source consisted of scripted radio dramas, selected through purposive sampling. Two programs were chosen: *Handumanan sa Isa ka Ambalahon* from DYHB RMN Bacolod (Hiligaynon) and *Handumanan sa Usa ka Awit* from DYHP RMN Cebu (Cebuano). These programs were selected because they (1) use Cebuano and Hiligaynon as the principal medium of communication, (2) contain extended dialogues that approximate natural spoken interaction despite being scripted, and (3) provide comparable semi-naturalistic spoken data suitable for discourse-based analysis. All recordings were aired between February and May 2018, providing a clearly defined temporal scope for the corpus. Scripted radio dramas were treated as valid spoken discourse data because they preserve conversational structure, pragmatic intent, and contextual meaning while allowing systematic cross-linguistic comparison.

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, preserving lexical forms, stress patterns, and relevant contextual cues. From the transcriptions, shared lexical items between Cebuano and Hiligaynon were identified through close reading and iterative comparison. Lexical items were operationally defined as words or expressions exhibiting formal similarity across the two languages but potentially differing in meaning, grammatical function, or discourse usage. Identified terms were documented using a researcher-developed tally sheet, which recorded the lexical form, discourse context, grammatical role, and preliminary semantic interpretation. To ensure accurate interpretation, all identified lexical items and their contextual meanings were validated by expert native speakers of Cebuano and Hiligaynon.

The study employed a triangulated qualitative analytical procedure integrating descriptive analysis, qualitative content analysis, and structural analysis. Descriptive analysis systematically categorized and illustrated the features of shared lexical items, providing a foundational mapping necessary for deeper interpretation (Lim, 2024). Qualitative content analysis examined how these lexical items functioned within utterances and dialogues, enabling interpretation of semantic relationships and communicative functions within spoken discourse (Zhang, 2009; Luo, 2019). Coding was conducted iteratively, with categories refined through constant comparison across instances of use. Structural analysis investigated the grammatical and syntactic behavior of shared lexical items, including stress patterns and functional roles, to determine how lexical convergence interacts with semantic variation in discourse contexts (Maeng, 2023).

To support precise semantic interpretation, the analysis was informed by translation studies frameworks, emphasizing linguistic competence and contextual meaning equivalence rather than literal correspondence (Munday, 2016; Baker, 2018). This framework facilitated accurate semantic mapping between Cebuano and Hiligaynon lexical items and strengthened interpretive rigor.

Analytical trustworthiness was ensured through multiple forms of triangulation. Data triangulation was achieved by examining two regional language corpora; analyst triangulation involved iterative review and refinement of coding decisions; and expert validation by native speakers enhanced credibility and confirmability.

Through this structured qualitative process, the study systematically examined the extent of lexical convergence, identified patterns of semantic variation shaped by stress patterns, grammatical function, and discourse context, and interpreted how shared lexical forms construct meaning within scripted spoken discourse. This methodological approach aligns with the study's theoretical orientation toward meaning-in-use and contributes to qualitative research on language convergence and variation in Philippine languages.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the key findings, illustrating patterns of lexical convergence and semantic variation between Cebuano and Hiligaynon. The discussion situates the results in relation to prior studies and theoretical frameworks, highlighting both stable and divergent meanings.

**Table 1.** Common Terminologies of Cebuano and Hiligaynon

<i>karon</i>	<i>buta</i>	<i>bugas</i>	<i>sabot</i>	<i>bulig</i>	<i>hipos</i>
<i>uga</i>	<i>halog</i>	<i>usa</i>	<i>duwa</i>	<i>sapi</i>	<i>hapit</i>
<i>buling</i>	<i>yuta</i>	<i>luto</i>	<i>tuod</i>	<i>dulot</i>	<i>uma</i>
<i>dayon</i>	<i>buot</i>	<i>tubtub</i>	<i>totoy</i>	<i>halin</i>	<i>upod</i>
<i>baton</i>	<i>bati</i>	<i>ila</i>	<i>bulang</i>	<i>dulog</i>	<i>ayo</i>
<i>iban</i>	<i>igo</i>	<i>daog</i>	<i>sakop</i>	<i>para</i>	<i>tudlo</i>
<i>tagad</i>	<i>luthang</i>	<i>kaila</i>	<i>asa</i>	<i>bakul</i>	<i>ilog</i>

<i>tubo</i>	<i>tuyo</i>	<i>tanga</i>	<i>tuo</i>	<i>sulay</i>	<i>tilaw</i>
<i>bagay</i>	<i>amo</i>				

Table 1 lists the shared lexical items extracted from the radio drama recordings. These terms show a clear degree of lexical convergence, reflecting genealogical relatedness and ongoing contact between Cebuano and Hiligaynon speakers. While the shared lexical forms indicate overlap in vocabulary, formal similarity alone does not guarantee semantic equivalence. This finding aligns with [Ciruela \(2024\)](#) and [Maxilom \(2017\)](#), who observed that shared orthographic forms in Cebuano and Hiligaynon can diverge in meaning depending on context. It underscores the need to examine meaning-in-use in authentic spoken discourse rather than relying solely on lexical form.

**Table 2.** Linguistic Features of Common Terminologies

**Table 2.1.** Cebuano Language

Terms	Semantic		Grammatical Function
	Denotative	Connotative	
<i>amo</i>	<i>boss</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>asa</i>	<i>where</i>		<i>wh question</i>
<i>ayo</i>	<i>knock, knock</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>bagay</i>	<i>fit</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>bakul</i>	<i>to cut off someone's feet</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>baton</i>	<i>to count (sugarcanes)</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>bati</i>	<i>ugly</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>bugas</i>	<i>pimple/rice</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>bulang</i>	<i>tool for cockfighting</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>bulig</i>	<i>bushel of banana</i>		<i>mass noun</i>
<i>buot</i>	<i>sense of consciousness</i>		<i>adverb</i>
<i>buta</i>	<i>blind</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>buling</i>	<i>dirt</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>daog</i>	<i>carry</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>dayon</i>	<i>enter</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>dulog</i>	<i>to sleep with</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>dulot</i>	<i>affect</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>duwa</i>	<i>game</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>halin</i>	<i>income</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>halog</i>	<i>hug</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>hapit</i>	<i>nearby</i>		<i>preposition</i>
<i>hipos</i>	<i>to keep</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>iban</i>	<i>decreased</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>igo</i>	<i>hit</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>ila</i>	<i>birthmark</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>ilog</i>	<i>win over</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>karon</i>	<i>now</i>		<i>adverb</i>
<i>kaila</i>	<i>know</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>luthang</i>	<i>bamboo weapon</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>luto</i>	<i>cooked</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>para</i>	<i>for</i>		<i>preposition</i>

Terms	Semantic		Grammatical Function
	Denotative	Connotative	
<i>sabot</i>	<i>plan</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>sakop</i>	<i>member</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>sapi</i>	<i>income</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>sulay</i>	<i>try</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>tagad</i>	<i>accommodate</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>tanga</i>	<i>fool</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>sako</i>	<i>busy</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>totoy</i>	<i>breast</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tubo</i>	<i>to grow</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>tubtub</i>	<i>bite attempt</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>tudlo</i>	<i>finger</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tuo</i>	<i>believe</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>tuod</i>	<i>decayed wood</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tuyo</i>	<i>purpose</i>		<i>adverb</i>
<i>uga</i>	<i>dry</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>uma</i>	<i>farm</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>usa</i>	<i>number</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>upod</i>	<i>melt</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>yuta</i>	<i>soil/mud</i>		<i>noun</i>

Table 2.1 lists Cebuano terms shared with Hiligaynon in the radio dramas, showing their denotative meanings and syntactic structures, highlighting how each term functions grammatically and supporting analysis of lexical convergence between the two languages.

**Table 2.2.** Hiligaynon Language

Terms	Semantic		Grammatical Function
	Denotative	Connotative	
<i>amo</i>	<i>monkey</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>asa</i>	<i>dependent</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>ayo</i>	<i>fix</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>bagay</i>	<i>things</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>bakul</i>	<i>whip</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>baton</i>	<i>receive</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>bati</i>	<i>hear</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>bugas</i>	<i>rice</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>bulang</i>	<i>derby</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>bulig</i>	<i>help</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>buot</i>	<i>kind</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>buta</i>	<i>full</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>buling</i>	<i>charcoal's stain</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>daog</i>	<i>win</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>dayon</i>	<i>next</i>		<i>signal words</i>
<i>dulog</i>	<i>to stop</i>		<i>verb</i>

Terms	Semantic		Grammatical Function
	Denotative	Connotative	
<i>dulot</i>	<i>penetrate</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>duwa</i>	<i>number</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>halin</i>	<i>from</i>		<i>preposition</i>
<i>halog</i>	<i>loose</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>hapit</i>	<i>stop over</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>hipos</i>	<i>silent</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>iban</i>	<i>others</i>		<i>verb/adjective</i>
<i>igo</i>	<i>fit</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>ila</i>	<i>them</i>		<i>pronoun</i>
<i>ilog</i>	<i>mimic</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>karon</i>	<i>later</i>		<i>signal word</i>
<i>kaila</i>	<i>wild</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>luthang</i>	<i>murdered</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>luto</i>	<i>ripe</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>para</i>	<i>signal to stop</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>sabot</i>	<i>pubic hair</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>sakop</i>	<i>include</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>sapi</i>	<i>possess</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>sulay</i>	<i>rained on</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tagad</i>	<i>agricultural term</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tanga</i>	<i>cockroach</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>sako</i>	<i>taste</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>totoy</i>	<i>puppy</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tubo</i>	<i>sugarcane</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tubtub</i>	<i>dead end</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>tudlo</i>	<i>teach</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>tuo</i>	<i>right</i>		<i>direction</i>
<i>tuod</i>	<i>stiff</i>		<i>adjective</i>
<i>tuyo</i>	<i>sleepy</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>uga</i>	<i>dried fish</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>uma</i>	<i>mountainous area</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>usa</i>	<i>deer</i>		<i>noun</i>
<i>upod</i>	<i>accompany</i>		<i>verb</i>
<i>yuta</i>	<i>expression</i>		<i>interjection</i>

Table 2.2 lists Hiligaynon terms shared with Cebuano in the radio dramas, showing their denotative and connotative meanings and grammatical function, highlighting how each term functions in context and supporting analysis of lexical convergence and semantic variation between the two languages.

Tables 2.1 (Cebuano) and 2.2 (Hiligaynon) present denotative and contextual meanings, grammatical function, and usage of shared terms. Many lexical forms differ in grammatical role and pragmatic function across the two languages. Identical forms functioning as different parts of speech lead to shifts in meaning. For example, a term functioning as a noun in Cebuano may function as a verb in Hiligaynon, producing divergent interpretations. This supports discourse-based views that semantic variation emerges from grammatical positioning and context, reinforcing the

theoretical importance of studying meaning-in-use (Bach, 2008).

**Table 3.** Common Cebuano and Hiligaynon Terminologies with Their Stress Patterns and Meanings

<b>Cebuano</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Hiligaynon</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<i>âmo</i>	<i>boss</i>	<i>amó</i>	<i>monkey</i>
<i>bulàng</i>	<i>weapon used in cockfighting</i>	<i>bûlang</i>	<i>derby</i>
<i>bùta</i>	<i>blind</i>	<i>butà</i>	<i>full</i>
<i>dulòg</i>	<i>to sleep with</i>	<i>dùlog</i>	<i>to stop</i>
<i>dûlot</i>	<i>offer/gave</i>	<i>dùlot</i>	<i>absorb</i>
<i>hálin</i>	<i>income</i>	<i>halin</i>	<i>from</i>
<i>îban</i>	<i>decreased</i>	<i>ibàn</i>	<i>others</i>
<i>igò</i>	<i>hit</i>	<i>igó</i>	<i>fit</i>
<i>lutò</i>	<i>blisters</i>	<i>lûto</i>	<i>ripped</i>
<i>sulày</i>	<i>try</i>	<i>sûlay</i>	<i>rained on</i>
<i>tangà</i>	<i>fool</i>	<i>tânga</i>	<i>cockroach</i>
<i>tôtoy</i>	<i>breast</i>	<i>totòy</i>	<i>puppy</i>
<i>túbo</i>	<i>metal tube</i>	<i>tubò</i>	<i>grow</i>
<i>toúd</i>	<i>decayed wood</i>	<i>tôud</i>	<i>true</i>
<i>túyo</i>	<i>purpose</i>	<i>tuyò</i>	<i>sleepy</i>
<i>yutà</i>	<i>soil/mud</i>	<i>yùta</i>	<i>bad word</i>

Table 3 shows the common terminologies presented according to their denotative meanings and usage in both Hiligaynon and Cebuano, with examples drawn from the selected radio dramas. The analysis shows that while some terms are similar in spelling and pronunciation, differences in stress often contribute to semantic variation. The terms are presented alphabetically.

For example, the Cebuano word “AMO” means “boss” and is used as a noun in the sentence, “*Himuon ni namo kai sugo kini sa among amo*” (“*We will do this because it is the order of our boss*”). In Hiligaynon, however, “*Kun amo, may chansa gali ko sa imo*” (“*If that’s confirmed, I actually have a chance with you*”) uses “amo” as a verb meaning confirmation or agreement, illustrating how stress and sentence context affect meaning.

The term “BULANG” in Cebuano refers to a cockfighting tool (noun: “*Ang bulang iya gigamit sa piyesta*” / “*He used the cockfighting tool during the festival*”), whereas in Hiligaynon it denotes a derby and is used as a verb (“*nagbulang ang mga taga-baryo Makiling*” / “*The villagers competed in the derby*”). Similarly, “BUTA” in Cebuano means “blind” (adjective: “*Total ang naa sa korte dile mga buta ug bungol*” / “*Everyone in the court is neither blind nor deaf*”), but in Hiligaynon it means “full” (adjective: “*Nabuta ang tubigan tungod sa ulan*” / “*The water is full because of the rain*”). These contrasts demonstrate that lexical convergence is partial and context-dependent. Even when words appear formally similar, their semantic interpretation depends on their functional role and placement within utterances. This supports discourse-based theories that meaning emerges dynamically from usage rather than static lexical form (Bach, 2008).

Other examples include “DULOG,” which in Cebuano means “to sleep with” (adverb: “*Nindot kayo akong tulog kung ikaw akong ka dulog*” / “*I sleep well if you are my bed partner*”) and in Hiligaynon means “to stop” (verb: “*Nagdulong ang salakyan sa ila*” / “*The vehicle stopped at their place*”); “DULOT,” which in Cebuano can mean “offer” or “give” (verb: “*Gikan sa RMN Drama Center gini dulot kaninyo kining palatuntunan*” / “*From the RMN Drama Center, we offer you this program*”), but in Hiligaynon means “to absorb” (verb: “*Wala ka dulot ang sundang para sa isda nga lulutuon*”

/ “The knife did not absorb the fish to be cooked”); and “HALIN,” which in Cebuano refers to “income” (noun: “Ibaligya nalang ug mahalina ang yuta” / “Just sell the land to earn an income”), while in Hiligaynon it means “coming from” (preposition: “Bag-o lang sa kahalina pakadto plaza” / “Just arrived from the source heading to the plaza”).

Additional terms illustrating semantic divergence include “IBAN” (Cebuano: “decrease” / Hiligaynon: “others”), “IGO” (Cebuano: “hit” / Hiligaynon: “fit”), “LUTO” (Cebuano: “cook” / Hiligaynon: “ripe”), “SULAY” (Cebuano: “try” / Hiligaynon: “rained”), “TANGA” (Cebuano: “fool” / Hiligaynon: “cockroach”), and “TOTOY” (Cebuano: “breast” / Hiligaynon: “puppy”). Each example demonstrates how lexical meaning varies depending on language, grammatical function, and contextual usage in utterances.

These examples imply that the common Cebuano and Hiligaynon terminologies in the radio dramas demonstrate that while many words are similar in spelling and pronunciation, differences in stress, grammatical function, and context often result in divergent meanings. For instance, “AMO” functions as a noun meaning “boss” in Cebuano but as a verb meaning “agreement” in Hiligaynon, while “BULANG” and “BUTA” show similar structural differences affecting interpretation. These examples highlight that lexical convergence is partial and context-dependent, influenced by grammatical, phonological, and cultural factors. The findings underscore the importance of considering stress patterns and contextual usage when analyzing shared vocabulary, providing insight into the dynamic interplay between Cebuano and Hiligaynon in spoken discourse.

The results indicate that lexical convergence is non-uniform and context-dependent. Stress placement and grammatical function play a central role in meaning differentiation, demonstrating that shared vocabulary does not guarantee shared interpretation. These patterns highlight the interaction between phonological form and discourse context in shaping meaning. However, some terms exhibit partial or unstable semantic overlap, with meanings shifting across contexts. These cases suggest that convergence and divergence exist along a continuum rather than as fixed categories, reflecting ongoing semantic negotiation in spoken discourse.

**Table 4.** Common Cebuano and Hiligaynon Terms with Shared Stress but Divergent Meanings

<b>Cebuano</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Hiligaynon</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<i>asa</i>	<i>where</i>	<i>asa</i>	<i>depend</i>
<i>ayo</i>	<i>knock to someone’s door</i>	<i>ayo</i>	<i>heal</i>
<i>baton</i>	<i>to count the number of sugarcanes to be planted</i>	<i>baton</i>	<i>to receive</i>
<i>bugas</i>	<i>pimples</i>	<i>bugas</i>	<i>rice</i>
<i>daog</i>	<i>carry</i>	<i>daog</i>	<i>win</i>
<i>halog</i>	<i>hug</i>	<i>halog</i>	<i>loose</i>
<i>hapit</i>	<i>almost</i>	<i>hapit</i>	<i>to stop over</i>
<i>hipos</i>	<i>to keep</i>	<i>hipos</i>	<i>keep quiet</i>
<i>ilog</i>	<i>win over</i>	<i>ilog</i>	<i>mimicry</i>
<i>kabos</i>	<i>poor</i>	<i>kabos</i>	<i>not enough</i>
<i>karon</i>	<i>now</i>	<i>karon</i>	<i>later</i>
<i>luthang</i>	<i>bamboo weapon</i>	<i>luthang</i>	<i>murdered/gunned</i>
<i>sabot</i>	<i>to understand</i>	<i>sabot</i>	<i>pubic hair</i>
<i>sapi</i>	<i>income</i>	<i>sapi</i>	<i>possess</i>
<i>tagad</i>	<i>accommodate</i>	<i>tagad</i>	<i>agricultural tool</i>

<b>Cebuano</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Hiligaynon</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<i>tubtub</i>	<i>bite attempt</i>	<i>tubtub</i>	<i>dead end</i>
<i>uga</i>	<i>dry</i>	<i>uga</i>	<i>dried fish</i>

Table 4 shows common Cebuano and Hiligaynon terminologies, in which several words were found to share the same meaning, stress, and pronunciation across both languages. The examples, presented alphabetically, include:

- AMO – “boss”
- ASA – “dependent”
- AYO – “heal”
- BATON – “receive”
- BUGAS – “rice”
- BULANG – “cockderby”
- BULIG – “help”
- BULING – “charcoal stain”
- DAOG – “win”
- DAYON – “next”
- DULOT – “absorb”
- HAPIT – “stopover”
- IGO – “hit”
- ILA – “others”
- LUTO – “cooked”
- PARA – “for”
- SAKO – “busy / sack”
- SAKOP – “include”
- TANGA – “fool”
- TUBO – “sugarcane”
- TUDLO – “teach”
- TUO – “right”
- UMA – “farm”
- USA – “deer”

These examples indicate that lexical convergence can occur not only in spelling and pronunciation but also in meaning, demonstrating areas of semantic overlap and reinforcing the shared linguistic heritage between Cebuano and Hiligaynon.

These terms represent areas of semantic stability, reinforcing the shared linguistic heritage of Cebuano and Hiligaynon. Their coexistence with divergent terms confirms that lexical convergence operates selectively rather than uniformly within the same discourse community.

Consistent with [Bach's \(2008\)](#) argument that word meaning is shaped by usage within utterances, the present findings show that semantic interpretation in Cebuano and Hiligaynon depends heavily on grammatical function, stress patterns, and discourse context. While previous studies on Philippine languages have documented lexical similarity, this study extends existing literature by providing a qualitative, discourse-based analysis grounded in semi-naturalistic spoken data. Rather than treating shared vocabulary as static, the study demonstrates how meaning emerges dynamically through contextualized language use. This perspective is evident in the analysis of Cebuano and Hiligaynon radio dramas, where terms like "AMO," "BUTA," and "DULOG" exhibit semantic variations influenced by their grammatical function and stress patterns.

Overall, the findings demonstrate significant yet non-uniform lexical convergence, alongside systematic semantic variation shaped by stress patterns, grammatical function, and discourse context. Examining shared vocabulary in authentic spoken data provides a more precise understanding of how convergence and variation interact in closely related Philippine languages.

### Supporting Studies

Recent studies further support these findings. For instance, a comparative morpho-lexical analysis by [Ciruela \(2024\)](#) highlights that despite similar orthographic forms, Cebuano and Hiligaynon words can diverge in meaning and usage, underscoring the importance of contextual understanding in linguistic interpretation. This observation is consistent with the present study's findings that shared lexical forms in Cebuano and Hiligaynon do not always result in equivalent meanings in spoken discourse.

Additionally, [Holtgraves \(2010\)](#) discusses how language functions as a social tool, with words and utterances serving as vehicles for conveying intentions and meanings that go beyond their literal definitions. This perspective is evident in the analysis of Cebuano and Hiligaynon radio dramas, where meaning is shaped by syntactic role, stress patterns, and sentence context.

The findings of this study also align with existing research on lexical convergence and semantic variation in closely related languages. [Maxilom \(2017\)](#) observed that Cebuano words undergo semantic changes such as metaphor and broadening, influenced by factors like language contact and expressive use in both written and spoken contexts. Similarly, the current study identified common terms in Cebuano and Hiligaynon that exhibit parallel forms but variable meanings depending on their grammatical function and contextual usage, underscoring the dynamic nature of language use.

Furthermore, the study's findings resonate with [Rentillo's \(2025\)](#) analysis of dialectal convergence in the Hiligaynon–Kinaray-a zone, highlighting how closely related varieties share lexical items while maintaining semantic distinctions. Also, [Pilar \(2024\)](#) found that the Kawayan dialect in Southern Negros shares substantial lexical similarities with both Cebuano and Hiligaynon, reflecting patterns of linguistic convergence observed across related Philippine languages. These studies support the present findings that lexical convergence can coexist with semantic variation in spoken discourse.

Collectively, these studies contribute to a deeper understanding of how shared vocabulary in closely related languages can exhibit both convergence and divergence, shaped by contextual usage and discourse factors, as demonstrated in the analysis of Cebuano and Hiligaynon radio dramas.

### CONCLUSION

This study explored lexical convergence and semantic variation between Cebuano and Hiligaynon by analyzing common terminologies in scripted spoken discourse, specifically radio dramas from DYHB RMN Bacolod and DYHP RMN Cebu. In direct response to the study's objectives, the analysis revealed that the meaning and usage of shared terms are shaped not only by their denotative definitions but also by grammatical function, stress patterns, and contextual usage in utterances. Some terms, such as BULIG ("help") and DAOG ("win"), exhibit complete semantic convergence across both languages, while others, such as AMO and BUTA, demonstrate semantic divergence influenced by speaker intention and grammatical function. These findings confirm that lexical convergence between Cebuano and Hiligaynon is significant yet non-uniform, reflecting the partial and context-dependent nature of shared vocabulary in authentic spoken discourse.

At a theoretical level, these patterns extend discussions on linguistic relativity and language contact by showing that semantic variation emerges from meaning-in-use within discourse contexts rather than from formal similarity alone. By integrating a translation studies framework, the study emphasizes contextual equivalence and interpretive mapping of lexical items, providing a qualitative theory-building account of how shared forms are negotiated across related Philippine languages. In doing so, it aligns with prior literature on lexical convergence, semantic variation, and discourse-based language analysis while addressing the identified research gap in semi-naturalistic spoken data.

The study also demonstrates the value of radio dramas as a resource for examining language in social and cultural contexts. Beyond serving as a linguistic corpus, these broadcasts reflect Philippine history, cultural practices, and traditional beliefs embedded in language. Grounded in the study's theoretical insights on meaning-in-use, the pedagogical implications are clear: awareness of semantic and grammatical variation can guide teachers in designing responsive instructional strategies, creating contextually relevant materials, and fostering multilingual competence among students.

Overall, this research confirms that lexical convergence in Cebuano and Hiligaynon is selective and context-dependent, while semantic variation persists due to differences in grammatical function, stress patterns, and discourse context. By triangulating descriptive, content, and structural analyses within a translation studies framework, the study provides a comprehensive qualitative account of how shared vocabulary functions in spoken discourse, bridging gaps between prior research and the analysis of authentic semi-naturalistic data and fully addressing the study's research objectives.

#### **LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study is limited to a specific corpus of scripted spoken discourse, namely radio dramas aired from DYHB RMN Bacolod and DYHP RMN Cebu radio stations, within one month. As such, the findings may not fully represent all contexts of Cebuano and Hiligaynon language use, including informal conversations, written texts, or digital communication platforms. Additionally, the study focused on a finite set of common terminologies and did not examine pragmatic or idiomatic expressions, which could also reveal further nuances in semantic variation. The analysis relied on the interpretations of expert native speakers and the researcher, which, although systematic, may still involve subjective judgments.

Given these limitations, future studies could expand the scope to include a broader range of spoken and written corpora across multiple regions and social contexts to capture more diverse examples of lexical convergence and semantic variation. Comparative research incorporating other Philippine languages or dialects could provide deeper insights into patterns of lexical borrowing, convergence, and divergence. Additionally, longitudinal studies may explore how semantic meanings evolve in response to cultural, technological, and social changes. Finally, incorporating psycholinguistic or cognitive approaches could shed light on how speakers process and negotiate shared and divergent meanings in real-time communication.

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