

Development of the third gender linguistic variation

Lorlaine R. Dacanay
College of Arts and Sciences
University of the Visayas
ldacanay@gmail.com

Date Submitted: June 24, 2014

Date Accepted: October 18, 2014

ABSTRACT

Members of the third gender develop linguistic patterns by adding or inverting letters from the original word. Linguistic patterns show inversion, addition, changing, omission and coinage. The study uses descriptive-interpretative design. Three areas are interpreted; coined words are ambivalent to become discreet in exchanging messages that might be offensive to conservative listeners.

Keywords: *third gender, linguistic variation, queer theory, gay lingo*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is dynamic and arbitrary. Linguistic patterns vary according to gender orientation, regional location, occupational choice and socio-economic status. However, the representation of the third gender in language study is minimal. As observed, Zimman and Hall (2014) asserted that members of the third gender develop linguistic patterns characterized by adding or inverting letters from the original word. It is popularly known as *gay lingo*. The study investigates the proximity or distance of the *gay lingo* word from the original word. Since members of the third gender are underrepresented or unrepresented in the language study, conducting this study is deemed necessary.

Studies have already explored much of the spoken linguistic variation between male and female speakers. Studies proved that women have far more developed linguistic ability (Romaine, 1998; McElhinny, 1998/2014). Hence, women tend to be creative in reporting. The same studies proved that men, on the other hand, have economy of words. Their spoken language expose little adherence to correctness in grammar and structure. However, another pool of studies

mentioned that men are keener in giving accurate data; but, they are found to be more talkative than their women counterpart (Johnson & Repta, 2007; Howells, 1996; Wilson, 1996; Zimman & Hall, 2014). Furthermore, Nemati and Bayer (2007) did not confirm Lakoff's opinion regarding gender-bound language at least in the use of intensifiers, hedges and tag questions in English.

There are several noticeable gaps in the body of knowledge. Studies focus on both written and oral language registers. Spoken registers must be focused on, because language arbitrariness is prevalent. Studies have dealt only with the differences between female and male linguistic patterns. Members of the third gender are underrepresented or unrepresented in the language study. If studies mention the linguistic characteristics of the members of the third gender, they only represent Western and other countries, but not with the local setting.

In this study, linguistic pattern of the members of the third gender is explored through discourse analysis. It focuses on the spoken registers of the members of the third sex in Cebu City, Philippines. Observation of the members of the third gender engaging in a natural conversation is done in

order to gather spoken data. From the spoken registers, the study is geared toward analyzing the lexicographic processes involved in coining new words. Lexicographic process is the development of linguistic variation by creating a variety of words out of the original word. The distance and proximity of the newly-coined words in comparison with the original word are analyzed.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on Queer Theory. *Queer theory* establishes a socially constructed division between what is a normative behavior and a deviant behavior (Harris, 2005). Ritcher (1998) and Klages (2012) postulated that queerness focused largely on questions of homosexuality and transgender. The members of the third gender identify their sexuality beyond male-female polarities. Hence, they are deviant from the constructed gender norms. By extension, they develop linguistic patterns that are “queer.”

In connection, developing linguistic patterns different from the normative linguistic patterns spoken in a community suitably describe concepts on gender uniqueness; deviance from norms; and reinforcement of meaning-making comprehensive to the speaking community (Zimman & Hall, 2008).

Pertinent to the premise of the study, the variables are *lexicon processes* (LP) in identifying third gender uniqueness; *distance and proximity* (DP) of the processed lexicons from the normal Cebuano language; and *level of ambiguity of meaning* (AM) depending upon which context the lexicon has been used.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The study uses a descriptive-interpretative design for economy and convenience purposes. By purposively selecting participants who personally admitted they are members of the third gender, observation is made in order to record their naturally flowing conversation.

The primary phase is to gather data to identify lexical processes (LP). First to be done is listening

to the questions and answers occurring from a naturally flowing conversation between two members of the third gender. Second is to record conversations. Three conversations are recorded: one in the morning, one at noon, and one at night. Third is to transcribe their responses on field notes containing the context of the conversation. Fourth is to translate questions and answers into original Cebuano word. Fifth is to present data in tabular form to show: (a) participants' responses; (b) original Cebuano words of the processed lexicon; and (c) the English translation of the Cebuano terms.

The next phase is to determine the distance or proximity (DP) of the coined words from the original Cebuano word. This is done by determining the linguistic distance of the gay lingu compared to original Cebuano word.

Linguistic Distance. The Linguistic distance is compiled from the lexicographic processes of coining of a word. As defined, lexicographic process is a process of developing a variety of a language. For instance, given a base word, the equivalent derived word is obtained by:

Variable	(W) Weight
X_0 = no change	0
X_1 = inversion	1
X_2 = addition	2
X_3 = omission	3
X_4 = changing a letter or group of letters	4
X_5 = coinage (entirely new)	5

The distance between the base word (BW) and the derived word (DW) is:

$$d(BW, DW) = \sqrt{W^2x_0 + W^2x_1 + W^2x_2 + W^2x_3 + W^2x_4 + W^2x_5}$$

The distance function is a non-negative number $d \geq 0$. The maximum distance is 5 when the derived word is totally changed viz new coinage. Hence, $0 \leq d \leq 5$. Examples: Let the base

word be “laki” which means “male” translated as “ikal” in gay lingo obtained by *inversion*. Here: $d(\text{laki, male}) = 5$; while $(\text{laki, ikal})=1$. Obviously, the base word is closer to the gay language (weight of 1) than to the English equivalent word (weight of 5). Thus, linguistic distance can be measured by comparing how close or how far two words of the same meaning from two different speech communities. Another instance, the same base word “laki” (male) among general Cebuano speakers is translated as “kikerou” in gay-lingo speakers obtained by *omission* and *addition*. Here, $(\text{ikal, laki}) = 1$; while $(\text{kikerou, laki}) = 3.60$. Following the formula, omission has a weight of 2; addition has a weight of 3 $d = \sqrt{2^2 + 3^2}$. Hence, the linguistic distance is 3.60. “Ikal” is closer to “laki” than “kikerou” is. “Ikal” is more comprehensible than “kikerou” is.

In a linear draft, “kikerou” could have been given a weight of 5. With the retention of “ki” from “laki” (boy), the linguistic distance is reduced to 3.60. The final phase is to determine the ambiguity of meaning of the processed lexicon used by members of the third gender. Conversations are contextualized to show the arbitrariness and dynamism of the processed lexicon.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation. Table 1 compares the Cebuano third gender lexicon from the original Cebuano term; and identifies the lexical processes (LP)

of variation. The comparison is basically on identifying the processes which have been involved in the creation of a new coined word. Apparently, *inversion*, *addition*, *changing*, *omission* and *coinage* are the processes involved in concocting new words in the *gay lingo*. Concocted words are gathered from the three conversations. *Inversion* and *addition* processes are most often used in the linguistic variation. *Coinage* appears to be more often used. *Omission* and *changing* processes are used sparingly. There are words in Cebuano which are not changed; and there are English words and phrases used in *gay lingo*.

From the utterances, there are words having manifested *no change* (X_0). They fall in point (0) which can be comprehensible to general Cebuano speakers. The words do not have special meaning because they retain their meaning. These words are *librehon* (treat out), *gwapa* (beautiful), *swerte* (fortunate) as examples.

Inversion (X_1) is a lexicographic process of reading the words from the last letter to the first. For instance, “day” (girl) is read as “yad(s).” Other words involving this process are *akim* (sleepy), *imal* (delicious), *aan*, (there is) as examples. These words receive a weight of 1 as their linguistic distance from the original word. If one knows the principle of the development of a *gay lingo*, it will be easier in inverting the words back to their original form. Thus, the difficulty of understanding is less.

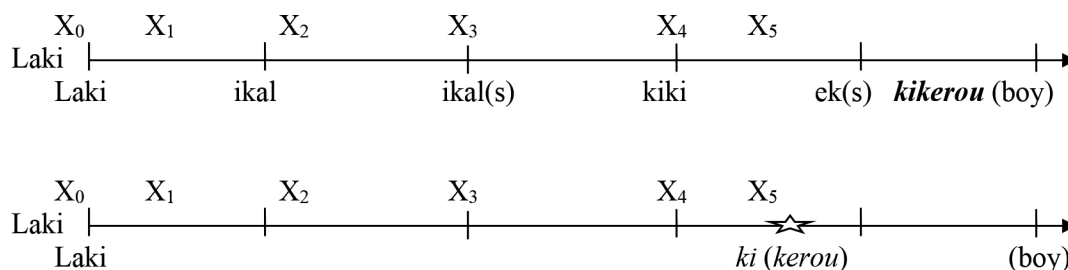


Table 2. Cebuano Third Gender Lexicon Processes and their Distance/Proximity Value to the Original Term

Participant	L1 Register	L2 Cebuano Word	Translation	Lexicographic Processes						Distance/ Proximity		Ambiguity	
				Age (0)	n (1)	n (2)	ig (3)	n (4)	e (5)	al	ge	ings	ext

1	GO	LAKAW	go						☑	25	5.00		
1	SAGOW!	(NONE)	(none)						☑	25	5.00		
1	IPREDA NALANG NA	IPREDA NALANG NA	have (her) pawned	☑						0	0.00		
1	IMO IYAAN	IMO IYAAN	your aunt	☑						0	0.00		
1	PARA AAN	PARA NAA	for (you) to have		☑					1	1.00		
1	KA DATCH!	KA KWARTA	you have money	☑					☑	25	5.00		
1	OOOYYYY..	OOOOYYYY Y	Uhuh..	☑						0	0.00		
1	HALA HAH...	HALA HA	watch out	☑						0	0.00		
1	BOYLET NA	LAKI NA	boy				☑			4	2.00	boy	Little boy
1	DASH	SAD	again		☑	☑				5	2.23		
1	GWAPA	GWAPA	beautiful	☑						0	0.00		
1	SWERTE	SWERTE	lucky	☑						0	0.00		
1	SA LOVELIFE!	SA GUGMA	in love life	☑					☑	25	5.00		
2	SHODI	AYAW	don't						☑	25	5.00		
2	ABASH	SABA	get noisy		☑	☑				5	2.23		
2	DAE	DAY	girl				☑			9	3.00		
1	IN FAIRNESS HA,	SA WAY PAGLIPOD- LIPOD HA	in fairness	☑					☑	25	5.00		
1	IMAL	LAMI	delicious		☑					1	1.00		
1	UG SAWAL	UG LAWAS	of body		☑					1	1.00		
2	LLLLLLLLLL LL...	(NONE)	(none)						☑	25	5.00	The word is lami	(body is delicious)
1	SIGE DAE	SIGE DAY	ok girl				☑			9	3.00		
1	WAKAL NA	LAKAW NA	go now		☑					1	1.00		
1	OMS?	MO	you(plural)		☑	☑				5	2.23		
1	NOAK	KAON	eat		☑					1	1.00		
1	NAMO	NAMO	our	☑						0	0.00		
1	DAE	DAY	girl				☑			9	3.00		
1	MOTOGSH NANA	GOTOM NANA	must be hungry		☑	☑				5	2.23		
1	IMO	IMO	your	☑						0	0.00		
1	KIKEROU!	LAKI	boy			☑		☑		20	4.47		
2	OTCHESERAN G BAKI,	OTCHESER A	Nosy frog				☑		☑	34	5.83	Nosy friend	Frog is a joke
2	CHISMOSA.	CHISMOSA	gossiper	☑						0	0.00		
2	HAHAHA!	HAHAHA	hahaha	☑						0	0.00		
2	BYERS	ADTO NAMI	bye						☑	25	5.00		
2	GIRLASH	BABAYI	girl						☑	25	5.00		
Frequency				2 5	2 0	20	8	2	1 9				

Addition (X₂) is a lexicographic process of attaching letters to the words. For instance, *yads/z-day* (girl), *graveh-grabi* (very), *starla-sikat* (famous), to name a few examples have been added with letters leading to ambiguity of the original word. Reoccurrence of added letters (h) and (s) is apparent. Hence, they receive a weight of 2 as their linguistic distance.

Changing (X₃) is a lexicographic process of changing the letters of either the original or the coined words. To illustrate, *day* (girl) is changed to “dae” a diphthong sound /ay/ to long /e/; *grabi* (very) to “graveh” bilabial /b/ to a fricative /v/;

amiga (friend) to “meká” hard, long sound /iy/ is substituted with soft, short sound /É/. The linguistic distance of these developments is given a weight of 3 leading to ambiguity.

Omission (X₄), on the other hand, is a lexicographic process of deleting a letter or group of letters from the original word leading to their incomprehensibility. Hence, the weight is 4. This process is evident in the words “meká” from *amiga* (female friend). The initial letter “a” is omitted. True with the word “kikerou” from *laki* (boy), the initial syllable is dropped and the final syllable is retained, added with other characters.

Lastly, *Coinage* (X_5) is a lexicographic process of creating new expressions which are incomprehensible to common Cebuano speech community. Newly coined words in the *gay lingo* are incomprehensible, aside from having received a weight of 5 in their linguistic distance from the original word. Listeners should contextualize uttered expressions because a common word may mean differently in the conversation.

In the same table, proximity and distance (PD) of the coined word from the original Cebuano word is reflected. Assigned points are reflected to the processes depending on the gravity of their impact on word derivation in the third gender lexicon. Linguistic Distance (LD) can then be determined by adding all the points for every process *gay* lexicon undergoes; and getting the average. The nearer the average is to 5, the more distant it is from the Cebuano word. Likely, the nearer the average is to 0, the closer it is to the original Cebuano word.

The table also reveals ambiguous meanings (AM) to terms perceptible in the conversations. Ambiguities occur when the words used are uttered in different contexts. Ambiguities happen when the meaning of the words do not fit from the traditional meaning Cebuano speakers perceive. Ambiguities also happen when different words mean one thing.

Analysis. The comparison between the derived third gender lexicon from the original Cebuano lexicon shows no boundaries as to how many processes the word coinage undergoes. For instance, "*akim*" means "*mika*" involves inversion process only. Both words mean *sleepy*. Moreover, the phrase "*motogsh na*" is the equivalent form of "*gotom na*." The phrase undergoes process of inversion "*motog*" from "*gotom*" but it has been added with additional letters "*sh*" to make it "*motogsh*." Thus, the term "*motogsh na*" undergoes two processes: inversion and addition before the phrase has been derived. It means "*hungry already*." Another instance of lexical processes is illustrated in "*meka*." From the Cebuano term "*amiga*," two processes are noticeable: omission

and changing. "*a*" is no longer seen in "*meka*." It could have been read as "*miga*." However, it undergoes another process again by changing the hard "*i*" to "*e*"; and "*g*" to "*k*." The terms "*meka*" and "*amiga*" both mean "*friend*." Lastly, *coinage* is a lexical process which is done by creating a new word unintelligible by common Cebuano speakers. It is illustrated in the term "*datch*." Compared to the common Cebuano term "*kwarta*," it is really far away from its original Cebuano term. For *coinage* lexical process, it is an interesting point to note that in *gay lingo* conversation, "*in fairness ha*" is uttered. It is far from the Cebuano phrase "*sa way paglipod-lipod ha*." In that utterance, the speaker uses a foreign phrase thus it falls under coinage because it is not derived from a Cebuano lexicon, but in English. Except the retention of "*ha*" which is a purely Cebuano expression attached to a foreign phrase, the phrase is far too different from the Cebuano language.

Secondly is to establish the linguistic distance. As an illustration, comparing the linguistic distance of "*imal*" to "*ampatuan*" is to compare the terms to the original Cebuano terms. "*Imal*" is from "*lami*." If a Cebuano who does not understand the third gender language variety, but knows the principle of the word formation, he will be able to understand it easily because the linguistic distance is not far enough for it to be unintelligible. However, "*ampatuan*" is purely not intelligible because it is coined. From the phrase "*okadyang ampatuan*" or "*dako kaayo*" (very big) in Cebuano language, "*ampatuan*" is not the same with "*kaayo*." There are no similarities between the coined word and the original which an ordinary Cebuano can associate it with. Hence, the linguistic distance is five (5).

Thirdly is to establish the ambivalence or ambiguity of the third gender language. When a friend asks, "*Yads, mika?*" or "*Girl, sleepy?*" normally, a "*yes*" or "*no*" answer will be enough. However, the word "*mika*" is associated with something else because the response talks about being a star in the night "*graveh ang pagka starla sa kagabhion*" or (I really had a huge job at night).

This response may be found off-tangent from the common Cebuano speaker. However, the conversation does not show radical response from the one being talked to. Instead the response is smooth, “*mao na panglaki pa!*” or “*That’s what you get with your boy!*” Being a star of the night is no longer about being a performer on stage or perhaps a famous person. However, it means being a great one with someone he adores.

Okadyang ampatuan means big. It has only been intensified because of the word “ampatuan” which is associated with the news on massacre. If one has to give meaning to it, the size becomes deadly. Eating at night time with a boyfriend has not been properly responded. The conversation shows that the participant becomes reactive to the expression of eating. It is logical though that they need to eat dinner because it is at night. Reacting to it by calling the other participant as “*Otcheserang baki*” makes one wonders why angst was there by calling someone a “*frog*.” Although it meant no harm to the one being talked to, it is still a connotation beyond eating dinner.

Interpretation

The linguistic distance serves as a blueprint whether or not a foreign language is comprehensible to a certain community. By determining the lexical processes involved in comparing a foreign word compared from a native word, linguistic distance can be measured. In the study, *gay lingo* is closer to Cebuano than it is to English.

The third gender language is dynamic. The lexical processes a *gay lingo* undergoes are limitless depending on the context. However, the commonly used processes are inversion and addition because they are easy to use; and easy to be identified by the listener. The word formation is spontaneous. The word is abstracted far enough from the original Cebuano word when coinage process is used. As can be noticed, it is useful in making and exchanging messages with a lot of sexual innuendos. Ambiguity and ambivalence of the message serve to hide meanings which

might upset conservative listeners. However, the other member of the third gender listening to the message directly understands what is meant.

V. CONCLUSION

The development of the third gender linguistic variation (*gay lingo*) allows the third gender to converse discreetly in public places. It allows confidentiality by speaking out negative comments openly. Generating linguistic patterns is a form of art in language studies.

Originality Index:	99 %
Similarity Index:	1 %
Paper ID:	442073927
Grammarly:	Checked

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Participant 1: 000YYYY... Hala hah... Boylet na dash. Gwapa, swerte sa lovelife!
Oooooooyy....watch out, you've got a boy again. Pretty lady, you are fortunate in your love-life!

Participant 2: Shodi abash dae.
Stop being noisy girl.

Participant 1: In fairness ha, imal ug sawal.
In fairness, he has got a good body.

Participant 2: LLLLLLLLLLLLLL.....
LLLLLLLLLLLL.....

Participant 1: Sige dae. Wakal na oms? Noak namo dae, motogosh nana imo kikerou!
Ok girl. Are you going now? You go and eat. Your boy must be hungry!

Participant 2: Otcheserang baki, chismosa. Hahaha! Byers girlash!
Nosy, talkative. Hahahaha! Bye girl!