

Acculturated Hispanic Borrowed Words in Cebuano Visayan: A Lexical Nativization Analysis of Contemporary Pop Culture Textuality

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Abstract

The centuries-long Spanish colonial period (1565–1898) fundamentally reshaped the Philippine linguistic ecosystem, resulting in extensive lexical borrowing across indigenous languages. This study examines the structural mechanisms of lexical nativization, the process of linguistic acculturation through which foreign words are modified to conform to native phonological, orthographic, and morphological systems. Drawing on Hockett's Theory of Phylogenetic Change and Haugen's framework of linguistic borrowing, this paper analyzes the structural transformations of Hispanic loanwords preserved within contemporary vernacular media. Utilizing a descriptive-matrix qualitative design, the study investigates the loanword modifications embedded within the prototype online Visayan song "Kuntis sa Hambog." A corpus of 20 Hispanic loanwords, comprising 11 nouns, 5 verbs, and 4 adjectives was extracted and systematically evaluated across separate grammatical matrices. The findings reveal distinct patterns of linguistic acculturation: Orthographic and Phonological Adaptation: While certain lexical items retain their original Spanish spellings, the majority undergo profound native phonetic re-spellings. These include the simplification of consonant clusters, the reduction or deletion of syllables, and the transformation of diphthongs into glide-vowel sequences. Morphological Derivation: Borrowed roots are actively integrated into Malayo-Polynesian morphosyntactic structures, undergoing native Cebuano affixation and morphological reduplication to fulfill native tense, aspect, and focus requirements. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that linguistic borrowing in Cebuano Visayan is not a passive receipt of foreign models, but an active, creative process of Filipinization. The paper concludes that digital platforms and popular music serve as living repositories that capture ongoing language evolution. It thus recommends expanded parallel investigations across diverse media genres and distinct regional Philippine languages to further map the country's dynamic linguistic cartography.

Keywords: *Lexical Nativization, Cebuano Visayan, Hispanic Loanwords, Linguistic Acculturation, Song Textuality, Sociolinguistics.*

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of the Philippine linguistic ecosystem is deeply intertwined with its colonial history. Over three centuries of Spanish colonization (1565–1898) left an indelible mark not only on the culture, religion, and socio-political structures of the Philippines but also on its languages. Among the over 110 languages spoken across the archipelago, Cebuano Visayan stands out as one of the most widely spoken, serving as a lingua franca in the Visayas and parts of Mindanao. When distinct languages come into prolonged contact, linguistic borrowing naturally occurs. In the context of the Philippines, thousands of Spanish lexical items were integrated into native languages to describe new administrative, religious,

technological, and domestic concepts. However, borrowing is rarely a passive adoption of foreign words. Instead, the borrowing language actively reshapes these foreign items to fit its own structural constraints.

In Cebuano Visayan, this manifests as *lexical nativization*, a process of linguistic acculturation where Hispanic words are adapted to match native phonological, orthographic, and morphological systems.

Because Cebuano Visayan is inherently phonetic (spelled as it is pronounced), foreign words undergo significant alterations, including vowel shifts, consonant substitutions, and the deletion of syllables. Furthermore, native morphosyntactic structures, such as affixation are applied to these borrowed roots to seamlessly integrate them into everyday speech.

While historical dictionaries document these loanwords, language remains a living, evolving entity heavily reflected in local popular culture. Pop music, traditional songs, and digital media serve as vibrant repositories of contemporary language use. This study evaluates the mechanisms of this ongoing linguistic acculturation by analyzing the specific morphological, orthographic, and phonological transformations of Hispanic loanwords within a prototype online Visayan song, "Kuntis sa Hambog." By documenting these shifts, this research illuminates how foreign linguistic models are permanently Filipinized and woven into the cultural tapestry of the Visayan language.

Theoretical Framework

This paper assumes that Hispanic words borrowed in Cebuano Visayan are acculturated through lexical nativization. This assumption is supported by the Theory of Phylogenetic Change focusing on linguistic borrowing as Hocket (365-366) explains:

The design of any language changes as time goes by...
one of the mechanisms of phylogenetic change is linguistic
borrowing. Whenever two languages come into contact,
one or both may be notified.

In the framework of contact linguistics, the structural mechanics of lexical transfer involve three distinct components: the model (the linguistic feature being replicated), the donor (the source language), and the borrowing language (the recipient system). Haugen (407) emphasizes the inherently non-transactional nature of this phenomenon, noting that nothing changes hands during the exchange; the donor language incurs no communicative deficit and continues its evolutionary trajectory undisturbed, while the borrowing language alone undergoes modification. Furthermore, the vector of this influence depends on the nature of social contact. While interpersonal, face-to-face contact fosters spontaneous, organic imitation between speakers, indirect or institutional contact constrains the linguistic trajectory, rendering the transmission strictly unidirectional (400).

The mere contact of languages A and B does not guarantee that one will borrow from the other. Wonderly (450) explains:

For a borrowing to occur, say B to A, two conditions must be met:

- (1) The speaker of A must understand, or think he understands the particular utterance in language B, which contains the model.
- (2) The speaker of A must have some motive, overt, or covert, for the borrowing.

Within the context of the Philippine archipelago, home to over 110 distinct languages, three centuries of Spanish colonial rule established the precise socio-historical conditions necessary for extensive linguistic borrowing. Over this prolonged contact period, thousands of Hispanic lexical items were permanently integrated and *Filipinized* through systematic phonological and morphological nativization. To empirically investigate the structural mechanisms of this contact-induced phenomena, this study analyzes a prototype vernacular text: the online Visayan song *Kuntis sa Hambog* (retrieved from *Visayan Songs Now and Then*; visayansongs.blogspot.com, 2026). Serving as a critical model of contemporary textuality, this song provides a rich corpus for lexical analysis, capturing the organic convergence of Cebuano Visayan and Waray Visayan as its primary linguistic media.

The song contains four stanzas, a chorus, and a coda.

First stanza has thirty-five words;

Second stanza has thirty-seven words;

Third stanza has forty-two words;

Fourth stanza has thirty-five words;

The chorus has twelve words; and

The coda has seven words.

The Hispanic borrowed words are 11 nouns, 5 verbs, and 4 adjectives, which are analyzed utilized separate descriptive matrices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Mechanics of Linguistic Borrowing and Phylogenetic Change

Linguistic evolution is frequently driven by external contact. According to the Theory of Phylogenetic Change, the design of any living language naturally shifts over time, with linguistic borrowing serving as a primary mechanism of mutation (Hockett, 1958). When two language groups interact, one or both systems undergo modifications. Haugen (1950) refines this dynamic by defining three distinct roles in the borrowing process: *The Model*: *The original linguistic feature being imitated*; *the Donor Language*: The source language where the model originates, which suffers no loss or alteration of its own structure during the exchange; and *the Borrowing Language*: The recipient language whose internal speech patterns are altered to accommodate the new feature.

However, contact alone does not guarantee lexical transfer. As Wonderly (1946) notes, borrowing requires two fundamental psychological and social conditions: the speaker of the borrowing language must understand the utterance in the donor language, and they must possess a distinct overt or covert motive, such as social prestige, communicative necessity, or conceptual gaps to adopt it.

Hispanic Influence and Lexical Nativization in Philippine Languages

The three-century Spanish colonial period provided both the prolonged contact and the socio-political motives necessary for massive linguistic borrowing across the Philippines. Scholarly consensus highlights that Spanish loanwords in Philippine languages are rarely preserved in their pristine, Castilian forms; instead, they undergo structural Filipinization (Wolff, 1972; Quilis, 1992).

Lexical nativization operates across three primary linguistic vectors:

[Spanish Model] —> [Phonological Shift / Orthographic Adaptation] —> [Morphological Affixation] —> [Nativized Cebuano Word]

Orthographic and Phonological Adaptation: Because Philippine languages like Cebuano Visayan possess highly phonetic orthographies, borrowed words are immediately respelled to match native pronunciation patterns. Common shifts include the simplification of Spanish consonant clusters (e.g., changing the Spanish *c* or *cu* to the native *k* or *kw*) and the transformation of palatalized sounds or diphthions (e.g., *inter-vocalic yod* developments).

Morphological Derivation: Once a root word is adopted, it becomes subject to native grammatical rules. In Malayo-Polynesian languages, this heavily involves affixation. Borrowed Spanish nouns and verbs are regularly appended with native affixes to denote tense, aspect, or focus, showing that the borrowing language treats the loanword as an organic component of its own lexicon.

Media, Song textuality, and Contemporary Language Evolution

In contemporary linguistics, analyzing pop culture artifacts such as song lyrics, digital media, and oral traditions is recognized as an effective methodology for tracking language evolution. Texts preserved in digital spaces capture vernacular language exactly as it is spoken and sung by the speech community. Songs, by their rhythmic and poetic nature, often highlight how words are compressed, modified, or combined with native affixes to achieve phonetic harmony, making them ideal textuality models for studying localized acculturation and modern lexical shift.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: NOUNS BORROWED FROM SPANISH

Nouns	English	Root	Spanish	Native Affixes
abogado	lawyer	abogado	abogado	-
amigo	friend	amigo	amigo	-
antiyohos	eyeglasses	antiyohos	anteojos	changing E to IY, J to H
asendero	landowner	asendero	haciendero	changing HACIE to ASE
barko	ship	barko	barco	changing C to K
ektarias	hectare	ektarias	hectarea	changes HEC to EK, and REA to RIAS
menteryo	cemetery	menteryo	cementerio	omitting CE and changing RIO to RYO
negosyo	business	negosyo	negocio	changing CI to SY
numero	number	numero	numero	-
recuerdo	remembrance	recuerdo	recuerdo	-
regalo	gift	regalo	regalo	-

Of the 11 Hispanic borrowed nouns, five retain their original spelling:

ABOGADO (Spanish ABOGADO, English LAWYER);

AMIGO (Spanish AMIGO, English FRIEND);

NUMERO (Spanish NUMERO, English NUMBER);

RECUERDO (Spanish RECUERDO, English REMEMBRANCE);

REGALO (Spanish REGALO, English GIFT).

Six revealed the linguistic acculturation of orthographic nativization:

ANTIYOHOS (Spanish ANTEOJOS, English EYEGLASSES), changing E to IY, J to H;

ASENDERO (Spanish HACIENDERO, English LANDOWNER), changing HACIE to ASE;

BARKO (Spanish BARCO, English SHIP), changing C to K;

EKTARIAS (Spanish HECTAREA, English HECTARE), changes HEC to EK, and REA to RIAS

MENTERYO (Spanish CEMENTERIO, English CEMETERY), omitting CE and changing RIO to RYO; and

NEGOSYO (Spanish NEGOCIO, English BUSINESS), changing CI to SY.

Table 2: VERBS BORROWED FROM SPANISH

Nouns	English	Root	Spanish	Native Affixes
debate	debate	debate	debatir	-
ginapala	shoveled	pala	pala	gina-
ginapiko	beaked	piko	pico	gina-
giregalo	gifted	regalo	regalo	gi-
gi-senyorsenyor	master	senyor	señor	gi-

Of the five verbs borrowed from Spanish, four changed their orthography and added native Cebuano Visayan affixations, as revealed in:

GINAPALA adds the prefix GINA- to the root PALA, a native spelling of the Spanish PALA;

GINAPIKO adds the prefix GINA- to the root PIKO, a native spelling of the Spanish PICO, changing C to K;

GIREGALO adds the prefix GI- to the root REGALO, a native spelling of the Spanish REGALO;

GI-SENYOR SENYOR adds the prefix GI- and repeated the root SENYOR, a native spelling of the Spanish SEÑOR, deleting Y, and changing N to Ñ;

DEBATE retains its root word DEBATE, a nativized spelling of the Spanish DEBATIR, changing E to I, and adding R.

Table 3: ADJECTIVES BORROWED FROM SPANISH

Nouns	English	Root	Spanish	Native Affixes
dyes	ten	dyes	diez	changing I to Y; Z to S
kwadrado	square	kwadrado	cuadrado	changing C to K
pinaka-rico	rich	rico	rico	pinaka-
uno	one	uno	uno	-

Of the four Hispanic borrowed adjectives, two merely nativized their orthography.

DYES from Spanish DIEZ, changing I to Y; Z to S;

KWADRADO from Spanish CUADRADO, changing C to K;

One adds the prefix PINAKA- to the root RICO (English RICH), changing O to H.

One retains its original spelling: the word UNO from the Spanish UNO (English ONE), changing O to U, and E to O.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Hispanic loanwords within Cebuano Visayan undergo structural acculturation primarily through the mechanism of lexical nativization. Because Cebuano Visayan operates on a highly phonetic orthographic system, where spelling directly mirrors pronunciation, borrowed Spanish models are systematically re-spelled to conform to native phonological constraints. This phonetic adaptation is accompanied by morphological integration, wherein foreign roots are seamlessly bound to native prefixes and suffixes to satisfy local morphosyntactic requirements. Ultimately, this evidence confirms that the integration of Hispanic elements into Cebuano Visayan is not a passive adoption, but an active, rule-governed process of linguistic nativization.

Recommendation

Based on these insights, it is highly recommended that parallel lexical investigations be conducted across a broader spectrum of mass media genres, literary texts, digital oral traditions, and formal historical documents. Expanding this research framework to other major and minor Philippine languages will provide a more comprehensive, comparative mapping of cross-linguistic acculturation patterns across the archipelago.

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