

# Isogloss of Mandaya lexemes: Looking into their linguistic variations

**Lilibeth S. Galvez**

[lilibethsgalvez@yahoo.com](mailto:lilibethsgalvez@yahoo.com)

Institute of Agriculture & Life Sciences,  
Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology  
Dahican, 8200 City of Mati, Davao Oriental Philippines



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## ABSTRACT

The Philippine ethnologue has a dearth of data on the dialects of the dominant ethno-linguistic group in Davao Oriental, Philippines, the Mandaya. These are among the indigenous people inhabiting in the area. In an attempt to propagate their existence, this qualitative study which employs an ethnographic approach has presented a linguistic analysis on the lexical categories of the Mandaya language. This was conducted in the six municipalities and one city in the province of Davao Oriental; Mati City, Tarragona, Manay, Caraga, Baganga, Cateel, and Boston. Results reveal that their lexicon is similar with the different Englishes and other languages of the world. The Mandaya exhibited language variation from Mati to Boston, Davao Oriental. These lexemes show morphological, phonological, and even orthographical variations among the seven localities. The distinctions of the Mandaya lexemes mark their geographical and social identity, since people who are most likely to talk to one another may possess similar linguistic utterance. Hence, variations of this ethno-language are attributed to geographical and social factors.

Keywords: Isogloss, Mandaya, lexeme, linguistic variations

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a central feature of human identity. It is vital in the transmission of knowledge from generations to generations. Whatever evolution of technology there is, the language evolves with a particular culture. Chomsky noted an important element of language, it is also culture-specific: each language is systematically different from others in the sense that it has a particular way of arranging the signs that encode meaning, and of communicating the world to its speaker. In that sense then every language is an efficient tool for encoding the peculiarities of the particular environment in which people live.

Dyen as cited by Llamzon declared that the Philippine languages belong to the Austronesian family of languages, which includes the languages of Oceania, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Formosa, and some scattered ones in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. It has been estimated that the Austronesian languages number about 300 to 500 and constitute approximately 7 to 10 percent of the world's languages.

Llamzon further added that although the linguistic situation of the country is characterized by one of great diversity, this multiplicity of languages is considered simplified by the fact that more than 90 percent of the population are speakers of eight languages, which have been traditionally regarded as "major languages" (perhaps because they have the most number of speakers), namely Tagalog, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Bikol, Iloko, Pampanggo, and Pangasinan; the rest comprise the speakers of the "minor languages" most of whom are pagans and Muslims.

Davao Oriental is among the provinces of Davao Region, Philippines. It is where an ethno-linguistic group, the Mandaya thrives. Mandaya is derived from the words "man" means first and "daya" means upstream meaning person in upstream or the inhabitants of the upstream (PPDO, 1996). Not many knew of their existence; besides, the language which also identifies their name as Mandaya is among those which were not given much importance to be studied. Only few have ever been recorded on the study of their dialects in Davao Oriental. As a matter of fact, SIL has made in-depth studies on the different indigenous languages in Mindanao but these are limited to Bagobo, Aeta Manobo, Yakan, etc. intended for bible translation. On the other hand, a professor of UP Mindanao made a study solely on Mandaya dialect for purposes of designing a curriculum on Mandaya.

Language then would be some unitary systems of linguistic communication which subsumes a number of mutually intelligible varieties. Llamzon further added that all languages exhibit internal variation, that is, each language exists in a number of varieties and is in one sense the sum of those varieties. But what do we mean by variety? Hudson as cited by Wardaugh defines a variety of language as "a set of linguistic items with similar distribution." This brings to the core of

this study on linguistic variation. Having known the dialects of Mandaya, this was spoken with distinct variation, just as the manner of utterance in Mati City, Tarragona, Manay, Caraga, Cateel, Baganga, and Boston.

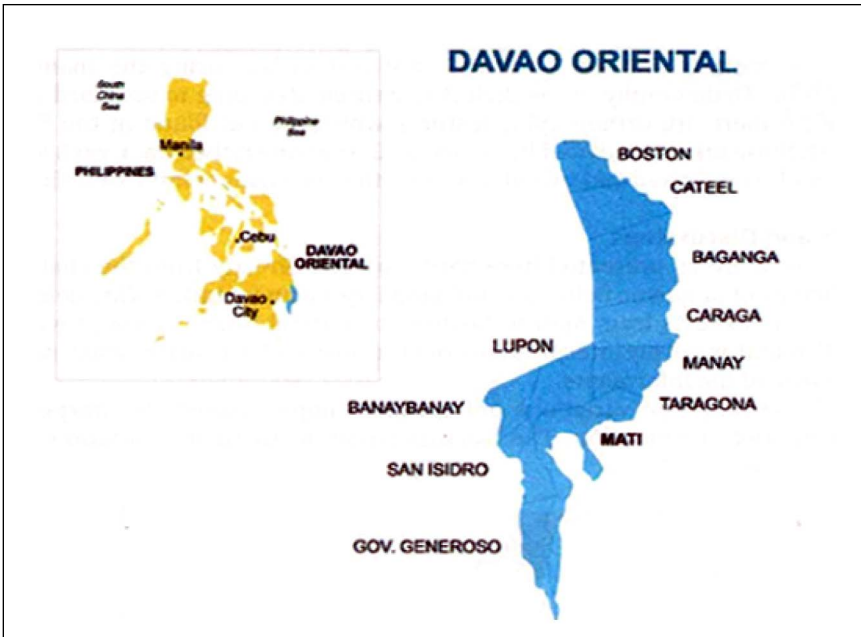


Figure 1. Map of Davao Oriental, Philippines from Mati to Boston as the locale of the study  
*Photocredit: davaocitybybattad.blogspot.com*

Hence when one hears a particular dialect, one is identified as belonging to this municipality. All people who lived in a geographically defined country speak the language associated with it, such as English for England, French for France, and many more.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

For Kortmann and Schneider as cited by Clark, if the aim is to undertake a study of linguistic variations in a specific geographical location, then a qualitative method is appropriate. This qualitative research sought the approval of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to secure the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) in adherence to the IPRA law. Once approved, NCIP had endorsed referral to the tribal council in each municipality and city.

The study considered the nature of the linguistic features in context and explored the texts and the set of texts in the transcribed interview and informal conversations. It is done with more depth, in consideration with other variables

and these are presented through language mapping, linguistically termed as isogloss. Texts are analyzed based on its morphological, phonological, and orthographical translation.

The morphemes and phonemes are transcribed using the manner of articulation. Orthography of the dialect is written according to standard scribe; however, if there are orthographic features which are not found in the English alphabet, these are represented by symbols. In the transcribed data, each lexeme is intricately scrutinized and sorted to answer the objectives of this research paper.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analyses presented here have emerged directly from the challenges and felicities of linguistic fieldwork and language documentation. This fieldwork, mapping the dialects from Mati to Boston, the coastal towns in the province of Davao Oriental, is not my interpretation but the recorded data of the actual manner of utterance of the informants.

These language variations only picked sample lexemes for purposes of discussion and presentation. The 'isogloss below featured the variation of the Mandaya lexemes.

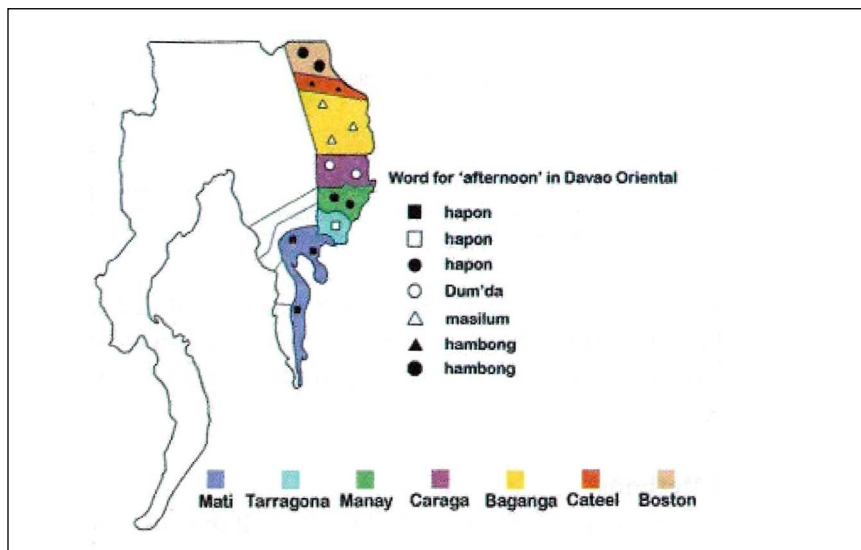


Figure 2. An isogloss of lexeme, hapon (adverb, afternoon).

The above figure shows variations of the adverb “afternoon” lexemes. It can be noted that the variations are phonological and orthographical. In Mati, the

lexeme hapon is produced with short vowel /a/ in the first syllable and short vowel /o/ in the second syllable. However, this hapon for Tarragona and Manay possesses vowel lengthening in the first syllable with [a/ and short vowel /o/ in the second syllable. While Caraga and Baganga present a variation not only phonemically but also orthographically, as the word afternoon becomes a du:um Ida for the former and masilum for the latter. Although in Cateel and Boston, the lexeme becomes hambong which is just similar as this can be attributed to their adjacent geographical location.

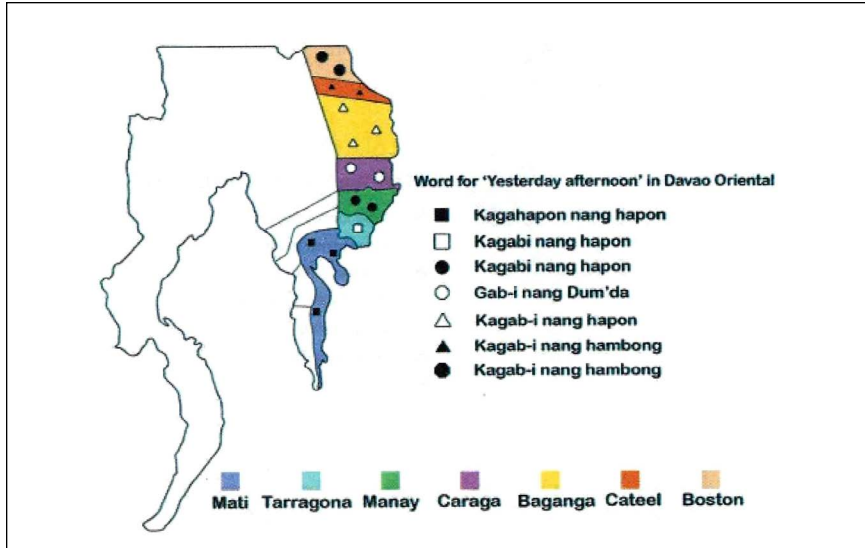


Figure 3. An isogloss of lexeme, ga;abinangdu:um (adverb, yesterday afternoon)

This shows the lexical variations of the lexeme, ga;abinangdu:um, an adverb of time, yesterday afternoon in the English language. The map above presents their orthographical and phonological variations. It is only in Mati where yesterday is kagahapon. The rest of the municipalities, i.e., from Tarragona to Boston use kagab-i. In Mati the lexeme kagahapon nang hapon shows redundancy. Kagahapon means yesterday but adding nanghapon indicates the exact time of the day yesterday which is in the afternoon. Unlike in the other municipality, such as Tarragona, Manay, and Baganga are the same, kagab-i nanghapon — it is noted that the first two municipalities follow gliding in the manner of articulation while the last one indicates the separation of the two vowels in manner of articulation. Variation can also be noted in the use of hambong (afternoon) for both Cateel and Boston.

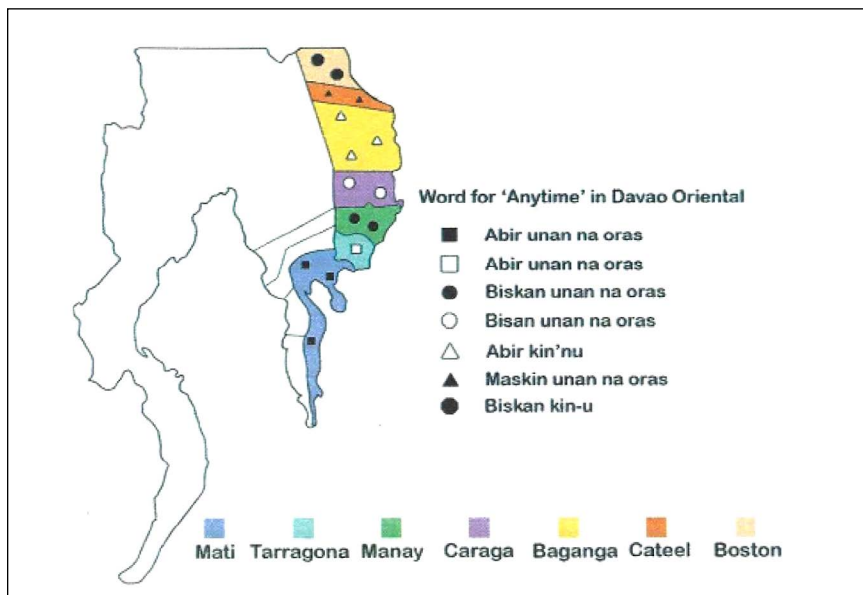


Figure 4. An isogloss of lexeme, abiruna:annaoras (adverb anytime)

The linguistic variations of the pronoun “anytime” from Mati to Boston, a single word lexeme in the English language, is equivalent to two, three, or four lexicon. There seems to be no difference in the orthography and phonology of the lexeme abir unan na oras in Mati and Tarragona as these two locales are neighboring municipalities. Similarly, in Manay and Caraga which are almost alike, the only difference is that of the lexeme biskan for Manay but bisan for Caraga, the rest of the lexemes biskan/bisan unan na oras are alike. In Baganga, the lexeme shows an entire variation orthographically, abirkin:nu. Cateel has maskin unan na oras while Boston has biskan kin-u.

Certain language varieties, once similar to one another, come to differ while other varieties remain very much alike over time. This may indicate that geographical separation and social distance promote differences in speech ways, as cited by Finegan<sup>7</sup>. This is further expounded by Clark which mentioned that language can be theorized and described, however when language or dialect is actually used in everyday life it becomes clear that, far from being spoken and written in exactly the same way by everybody, it is in fact tremendously varied.

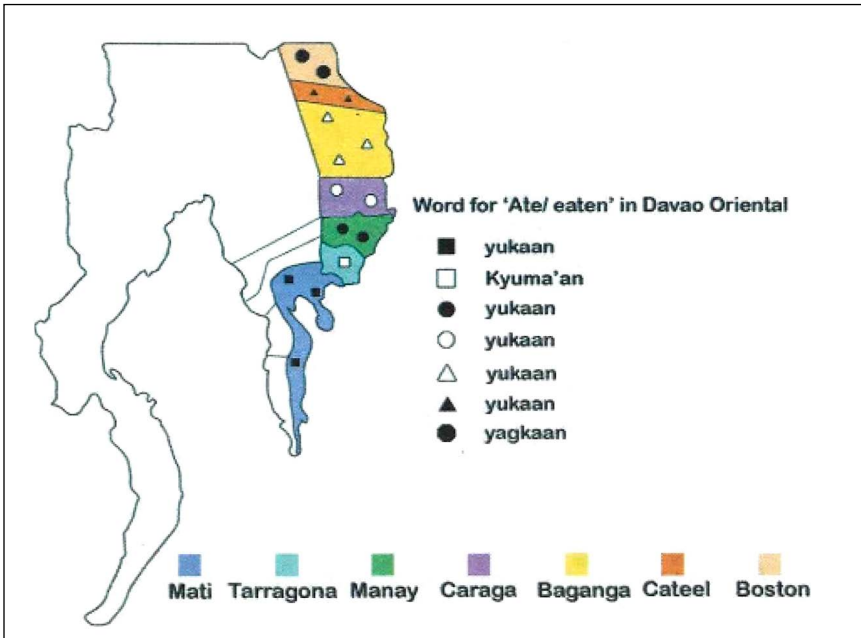


Figure 5. An isogloss of lexeme, ka:an (past tense from of the verb eat -ate/eaten)

This figure shows the linguistic variations of the verb ate or eaten. There is no distinction for the past form of the verb eat in the dialect. The lexeme in the figure shows a stem word of ka:an, variations can only be noted in the affixation, the prefixes. In Mati, prefix yu- is added to the base word, while in Tarragona, kyu- prefix is added while the base word kaan becomes ma:an, the velar /k/ is substituted with the nasal /m/. In Manay, Caraga, and Baganga, all of them have yu- prefix added to the stem word, similarly with that of Mati. In Cateel, the prefix ya is added, however in Boston, the prefix becomes yag- is added to the base word. The added [g/ in the prefix yag- has a similar position of articulation with the initial letter of the base word /k/ in kaan and final /g/ in the prefixyag-. In the phonological processes, this is termed velarization.

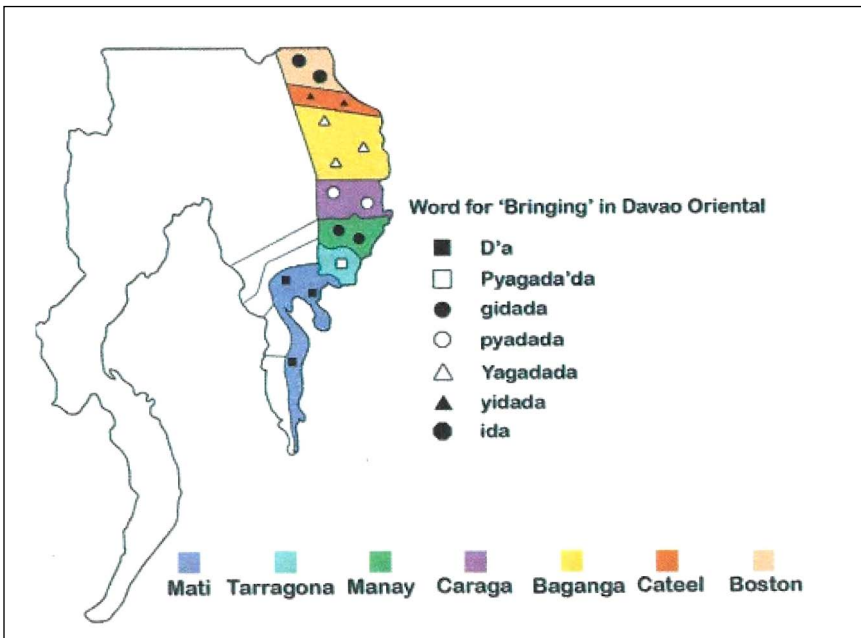


Figure 6. An isogloss of lexeme, da:a (present progressive form of the verb, bringing)

The linguistic variations of the progressive form of the verb “bringing” from Mati to Boston—The lexeme has a base word of da:a. The variations can only be noted in the affixation. Mati retains the base word da'a but there is vowel lengthening in the manner of utterance. However, in Tarragona, an added prefix which is pyaga- indicates the progressive form of the verb and another variation is the reduplication of the last syllable da'da. This reduplication of the last syllable is common also in the lexeme in Manay, Caraga, Baganga, and Cateel. Variations can only be noted again in the prefixes gi- in Manay; pya- in Caraga; yaga in Baganga, yi- in Cateel; and i- in Boston. All these prefixes noted present the continuous form of the action data.



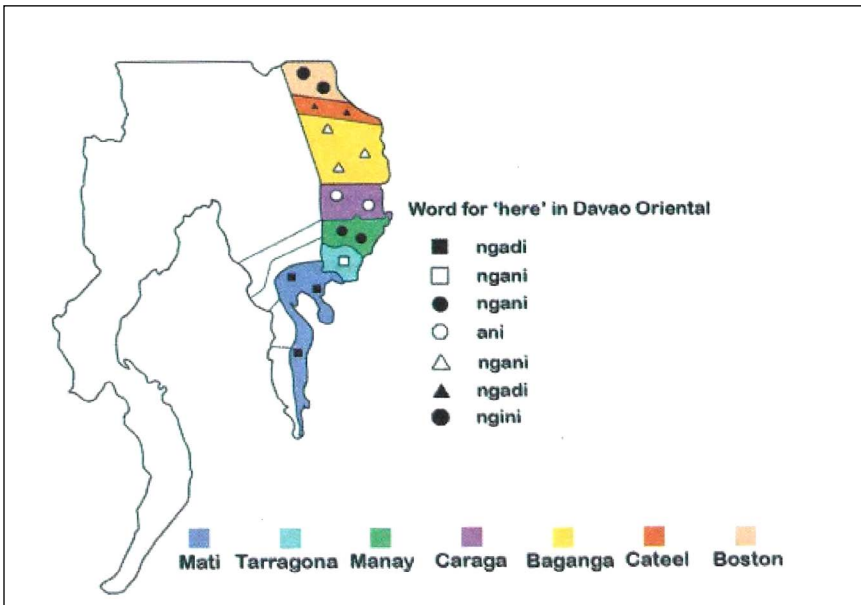


Figure 7. An isogloss of lexeme, ngadi (demonstrative pronoun here)

Above shows lexical variations of the lexeme ngani (here) from Mati to Boston, the base word of the lexeme is an i or adi, which exhibit similarity in the first and the third letter but the medial /n/ and /d/ shows variation. This can be attributed that both /n/ and /d/ are alveolars, their variations can only be cited that [n/ is nasal while [d/ is stop. As mentioned, all variations in the lexemes are referred to their prefixes nga- ngadi/ ngani/ ngini; only in Caraga where we can take note of the shortening of the adverb ngani to ani but manner of utterance is vowel lengthening in the first syllable. Articulating the nasal 1/11/ in the initial sound comes easier when followed also by the nasal [n/ which are also velar and alveolar respectively, besides they are both voiced.

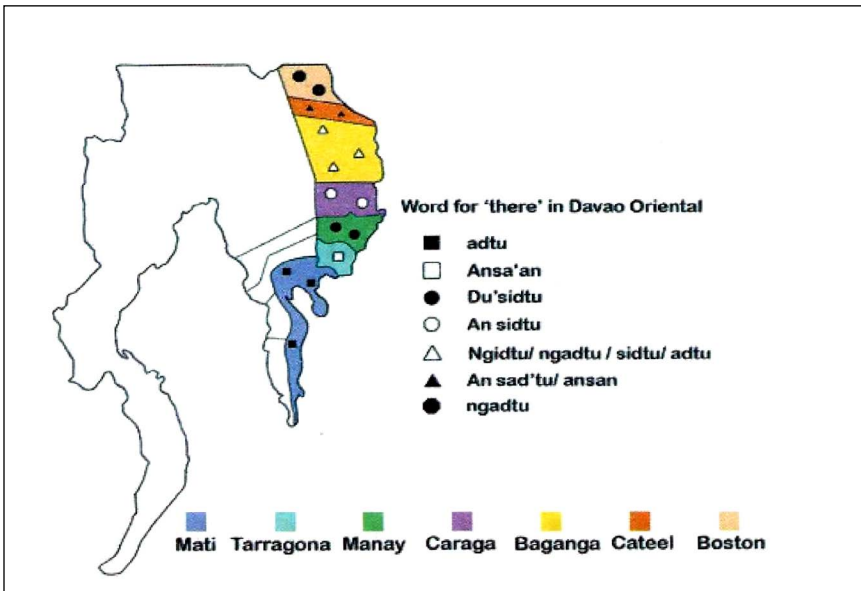


Figure 8. An isogloss of lexeme, adtu (demonstrative pronoun there)

This figure shows the lexical variation of the lexeme, adtu, connoting a demonstrative pronoun, there. This lexeme indicates that indeed there is no base word of the lexeme as orthography varies from one locale to the other. Mati has the lexeme, adtu, while Tarragona and Cateel have ansa'an with vowel lengthening in the second syllable. However, in Manay and Caraga, both take the similarity of the second lexeme which is sidtu, what varies with the two are the prefix du- for Manay and the prefix an- for Caraga. The most prominent variation can be noted in Baganga which is ngidtu or ngadtu which makes use of the nasal alveolar /n/. It also pointed another variation of sidtu and adtu; but what is common among their regional variation is the commonality of -dtu in the final phoneme.

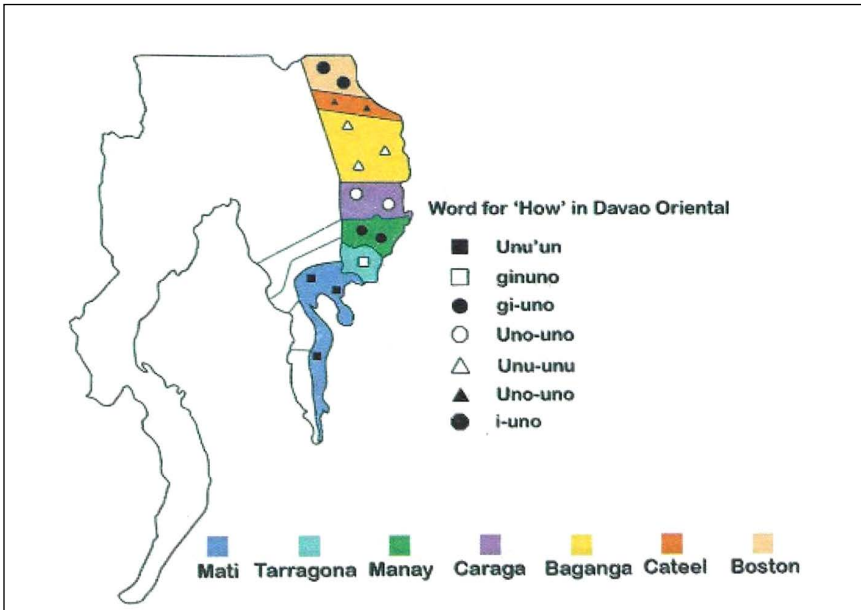


Figure 9. An isogloss of lexeme, unu:un (interrogative pronoun how)

This shows linguistic variations of unu:un, an interrogative pronoun how, from Mati to Boston. The lexeme has a base unu:u, a vowel lengthening in the second syllable. In Mati, the lexeme is added with a suffix —n; while in Tarragona, this is added with a prefix gi- and reduplicated in the final syllable nunu. In Manay, the lexeme is also added with a prefix gi- but the vowel pair when added with the base word uno is glided in the manner of utterance. Caraga, Baganga, and Cateel are all reduplicating the base word unu-uno. On the other hand, only Boston has added a prefix i- to the base word.

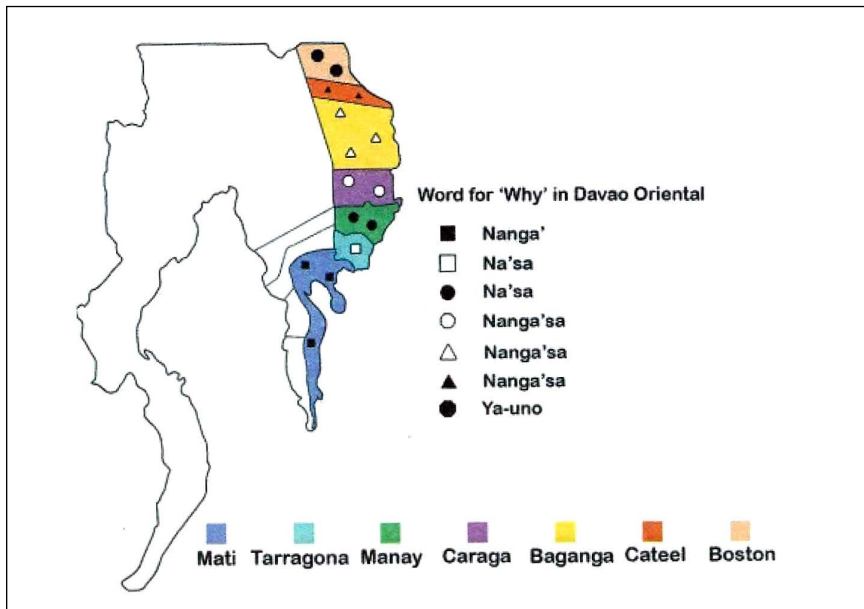


Figure 10. An isogloss of the lexeme, nanga:a (Interrogative pronoun, why)

This figure shows the lexical variations of the lexeme nanga:a which is an interrogative pronoun, why, in the English language. The prominence of the velar /n/ and the alveolar /n/ is common in all the lexemes from Mati to Cateel, the only variation is found in Boston which has a prefix ya-, which is voiced and has a place of articulation under labio-palatal and glides in the manner of articulation. Mati has the combination of [n/ and /n/ similar with Caraga, Baganga, and Cateel in the first two syllables but the last three municipalities are accompanied with the last syllable, which could be a suffix —sa, which is an alveolar-fricative combined articulation. On the other hand, Tarragona and Manay have only the velar /n/ in the initial phoneme. Boston shows its distinct variation since the suffix is not -sa but -uno

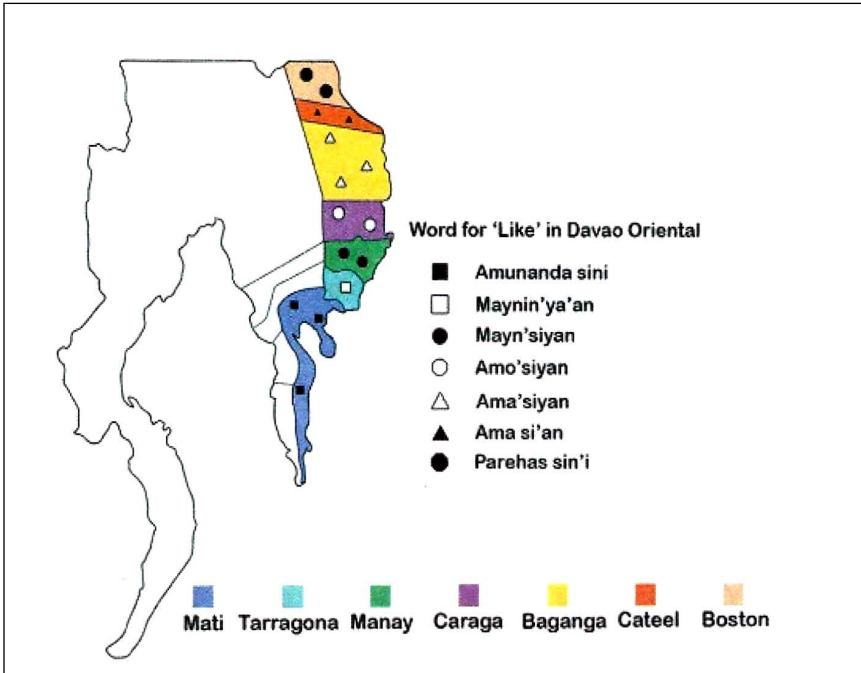


Figure 11. An isogloss of lexeme, ama:nini (preposition, like)

The linguistic variations of lexeme ama:nini, a preposition like, in the English language is shown above. The lexeme may have a base word ma; however, this cannot be found in Boston's lexeme as the influence of the migrant's community is strong enough to have been borrowed Tagalog term, parehas, by the Mandaya. Mati has amunanda sini, the second lexeme emphasized that sini, similarly with Boston has reference of nearness with the speaker. On the other hand, the second lexeme of Tarragona ya'an, si'yan for Manay, Caraga, and Baganga implies a reference of distance from the speaker. Hence, it is safer to claim that the accompanying lexeme gives more bearing with distance of the speaker to compare the object. In Tarragona and Manay, both of them have almost similar initial lexeme, mayn'in/ mayn which are easily articulated as manner of utterance is both nasal.

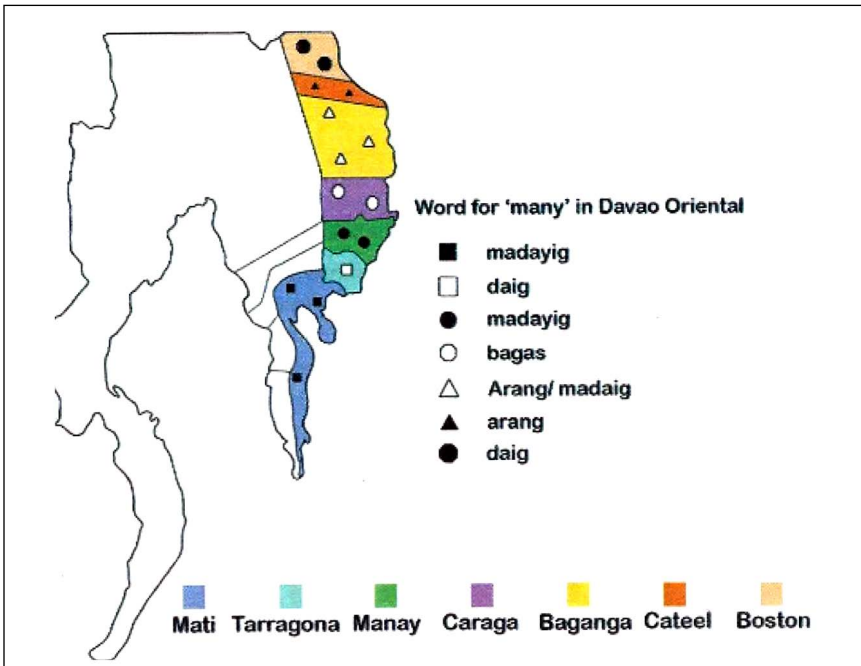


Figure 12. An isogloss of lexeme, da'ig (adjective many)

This figure shows linguistic variations of mada'ig, an adjective to mean many, from Mati to Boston. This lexeme cannot be identified with its base word as other areas prove to have a distinct variation in its orthography. Mati has madayig, actually, the pair of vowels in the lexeme found in the second syllable ended with the insertion of /y/ for the manner of utterance glides with this pair. However, the variation is obvious in their orthography as in the case from madayig it shifted to arang and bagas for Caraga and Baganga; none of the feature shows similarities or nearness of articulation except the prominence of the vowel /a/ in all the lexemes.

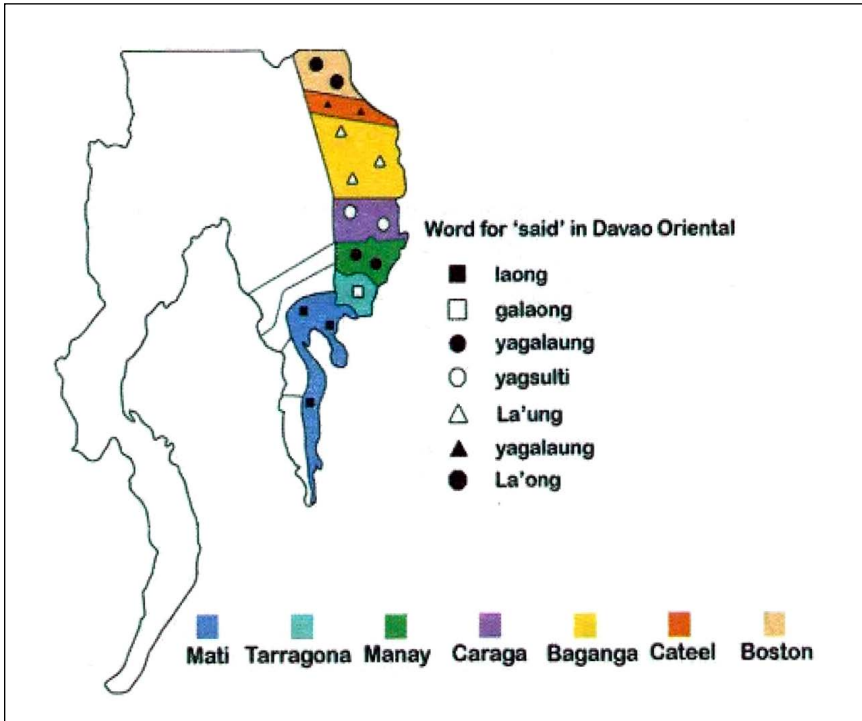


Figure 13. An isogloss of lexeme, lawung( past tense form of say -said)

The lexical variations of lawung, a verb meaning, said; but with the prefixes, they change in tense form is presented in the figure above. In Mati for example, even if it has retained its base form, it is still construed to be in the past. In Tarragona, the base is added with a prefix ga- to indicate past form of the verb. While in Manay, Caraga, and Cateel, all have similar prefixes yag- and yaga- respectively but the variation can be noted in the base word. Manay has retained the original base form of lawung while Caraga has a sense of influence from the Bisaya speech community which is sulti(say). Baganga has a similar lexeme with that of Mati and Boston; however, the latter articulated the distinction of the paired vowels while the former applied the gliding of the paired vowel and thus sounding like an inserted [w/ is added.

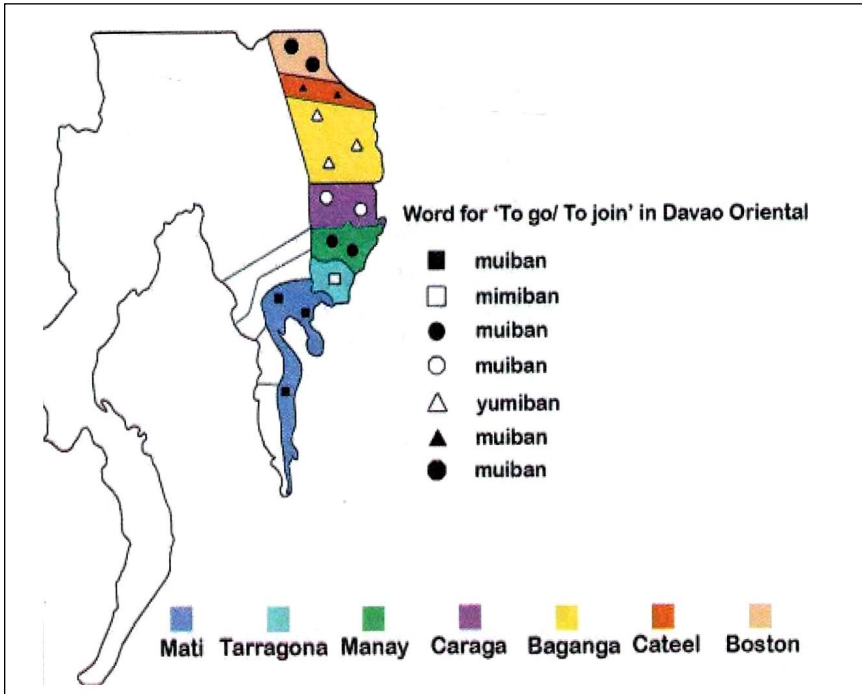


Figure 14. An isogloss of lexeme, muiban( infinitive, to join/ to accompany).

This figure shows the lexical variations of the lexeme muiban, an infinitive form, which mean to join or to accompany. All the lexemes show that they have the structure of iban in the last syllable, the variations can only be noted in the prefixes. Mati, Manay, Caraga, and Cateel have prefix mu-; while Tarragona has prefix mi-; and only in Baganga where the prefixyu-. Most likely the variations can be attributed that [m/ and /y/ are both voiced and sonorants.

### CONCLUSION

The Mandaya exhibited language variation from Mati to Boston, Davao Oriental. This could be attributed that these distinctions mark their geographical identity or it could be social identity. Since people who are most likely to talk to one another may possess similar linguistic similarity.

Those who reside along the coastal communities have also shifted to merging Cebuano and other borrowed languages as the speech community of the migrants dominated the use of the register Those who resided in the hinterlands have maintained to use their pure dialects. Besides, those who are most likely



to shift in the use of the dialects are the younger generations, particularly those who are sent to school outside of the community and those who have worked outside of their place of origin.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This research would not have come to fruition without those people who have contributed to its realizations—to the mayors and tribal chieftains of Mati City, Tarragona, Manay, Caraga, Baganga, Cateel, and Boston.

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