

Confidence in Chabacano: Counterbalance to a western ideology of language

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Abstract

This paper reflects a small set of problems drawn from a 1999 conference concerned with endangerment to Chabacano and held at the Ateneo de Zamboanga, which meetings the author was privileged to attend. Metalinguistic interest there included attention to the Zamboangueno lexicon with respect to origins and orthography. Interest was tilted to the Spanish component away from Philippine sources. Selected difficulties which result are discussed with respect to possible impact on preservation. Concerns raised by contemporary contact with Tagalog have led to proposals for schooling treatment, but questions both unsettled and even not yet addressed about who speaks Zamboangueno and about how Zamboangueno works suggest a need for more descriptive and analytic work. Voice (passive? ergative?) and verb serialization are two exemplifications beyond phonology and orthography of areas needing study. The paper ends with a question about Western history in the labelling of Zamboangueno as Chabacano.

Key words: Zamboangueno, reflexivity, metalinguistics, orthography, voice, serialization.

Resumo

Neste artigo recóllese un conxunto de problemas, bosquexados nun simposio celebrado en 1999 no Ateneo de Zamboanga, sobre o proceso de extinción do chabacano. Os intereses metalingüísticos incluíron o léxico do zamboangueno en relación coa súa orixe e ortografía así como o compoñente español desas linguas lonxe das fontes filipinas. Tamén se mostran certas dificultades resultantes en relación cos efectos que producen sobre a preservación da variedade lingüística. Algunhas cuestións que xorden do contacto contemporáneo co tagalo conduciron a propostas para o seu tratamento escolar, pero cuestións sen perfilar e mesmo sen formular acerca de quen fala zamboangueno e acerca de cómo esa variedade lingüística se desenvolve suxiren a necesidade de contar cun traballo analítico e descritivo meirande. O aspecto (¿pasivo, ergativo?) e a serialización verbal son dous exemplos de áreas que necesitan un estudio meirande máis alá da fonoloxía e da ortografía. O artigo remata cunha

interrogación sobre a historia occidental na identificación do zamboanguéño como chabacano.

Palabras clave: zamboanguéño, reflexividade, metalingüística, ortografía, aspecto verbal, serialización.

The phenomenon of language death and the attendant phenomenon of languages facing that danger of death have become rather common themes in public discussion of languages and linguistics in recent years. Typically it is linguists who are raising the alarms. To our chagrin, we frequently find that those listening shrug and turn away, muttering something about how we linguists are merely looking after our own highly specialized, highly esoteric interests. Why should anyone else care? As far as the common respondent can see, it's a language-eat-language world out there, and the price of modernization is creeping monolingualism, if not in English, then at least in one of the world's other 'big' languages. But what has brought us together here in the capital city of the Republic of the Philippines reflects something different, a refreshing change: it is citizens of the City of Zamboanga who, themselves, have raised the alarm. They are concerned over the future of the Chabacano language Zamboanguéño, and it is they who have asked for help in dealing with the present and the future of that language. This can only be encouraging for us in our discipline if we care about language attrition; we have citizens and concerned speakers of a language which they fear is endangered and they are seeking alliance with us. And then of course the question is: Can we bring our knowledge to the task and be of any help to them? That is why we are gathered here together.

The theme of my submission to this conference –perhaps from marvelling too much over the televised performances of the gymnasts at the recent Olympic games in Sydney– is that *confidence and balance go together*. A certain imbalance comes about from not having the strength to stay focussed, and too much leaning just to one side can lead to unwanted tumbles. Chabacano would never have existed in the first place had not language encounters between West and East taken place in previous centuries, but today as those East-West encounters continue in new contexts, to lean too much to one side, not to find a balancing focus, would put us at risk. The 'object' of our conference is language contact and the lessons of general linguistics, on the one hand, but it is also Chabacano, a language with Iberian links in history but nonetheless a language situated in today's Philippines that is the cause of our coming together. We aim to be of help to the concerned speakers of Chabacano, but there is the risk, still, that ideas about language which are too Western at base will be passed on from us and then themselves contribute to the further endangerment of the language. For any such already transmitted, we may have a special obligation of reflexivity and communication.

A major concern of mine is that we examine reflexively that special orientation

of linguistics in the West which justifies a study of language ‘for its own sake’, setting aside as not scientific or not properly theoretical approaches which leave unsevered languages, their speakers, and their ways of speaking as organizing everyday life. I find myself in agreement with the sentiment below, expressed recently by Daniel Nettles and Suzanne Romaine:

[Languages] have no tangible existence like trees or people. In so far as language can be said to exist at all, its locus must be in the minds of the people who use it. In another sense, however, language might be regarded as an activity, a system of communication between human beings. A language is not a self-sustaining entity. It can only exist where there is a community to speak and transmit it. A community of people can exist only where there is a viable environment for them to live in, and a means of making a living. Where communities cannot thrive, their languages are in danger. (Nettles & Romaine, 2000: 5)

From this point of view, the expressions of concern on the part of those citizens of Zamboanga who have sought assistance through *Instituto Cervantes* may well be a sort of early-warning signal, a danger perceived which is not only a danger to the language but also a danger which is in some way a danger of environment—a sort of miner’s canary, in an image Nettles and Romaine use.

Others will bring to this conference lessons from the wide world of linguistics. I hope that my contribution to this conference will be of some use to those of you who may be less familiar than I am with Zamboanga City and its Zamboangueno or who are acquainted with the city and its people but have not been there recently. It was my privilege and good fortune to have been invited to a conference in Zamboanga held in November last year. The conference was entitled: “Cultiva el lenguaje Chavacano ayer, ahora y hasta para cuando” and was held at the Ateneo de Zamboanga, sponsored by the Ateneo’s Institute of Cultural Studies for Western Mindanao and generously supported by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture’s Program for Cultural Cooperation; Mr. Rolando L. Macasaet, Presidential Adviser on Peace; and Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines, Inc.

Today I want to make use of things I learned during that visit and at that conference to try to contribute to the context of our present work. I will concentrate on a small set of problems among a set of concerns I heard Zamboanguenos speak about—and then, just once, touch on a problem not mentioned there at all. In this latter instance, I may risk going against our conference organizers’ injunction to avoid “topics that are strictly grammatical in nature”. I believe, however, that even here if we think about the sociolinguistics of our own discourse in contact with the concerns of Zamboangueno speakers, I shall not have trespassed across that line.

My earliest work on Zamboangueno was provoked—I feel that that’s the right word: *provoked*—by Keith Whinnom’s (1956) *Spanish Contact Vernaculars in the*

Philippine Islands. Perhaps we might acknowledge in today's context that Whinnom in the 1950s did himself raise questions about the future of Chabacano. He noted that what later came to be known as the Manila Bay Creole varieties were at that time not thriving. But he reported what I thought a ridiculously low number of speakers of Zamboangueno; I thought him quite simply wrong on that as well as on a number of other points. As a resident of Zamboanga City in the early 1960s I was listening to the language being spoken everywhere I went, and was struggling myself to speak it acceptably in my work and in my social interactions with city residents. The central aspect of what I referred to as provocation, however, was not numbers of speakers or his predictions of endangerment, but Whinnom's comments about the systematicity of the language as he found it. Whinnom said that he found the language "disintegrating" into two dialects and that under the circumstances, he thought it "almost absurd to attempt to write a grammar" (1956: 77). Echoing the same sentiment thirty pages later, he claimed that speaking in Zamboanga "offers so many contradictions that it is scarcely worthwhile to attempt to formulate any rules" (1956: 108). And of the phonology, Whinnom raised his eyebrows and wrung his hands over "vagaries and inconsistencies of pronunciation which make analysis virtually impossible". Today I would ask: What was Whinnom's idea of the nature of a language? My own view of Zamboangueno in those days was not through the filter of any prior knowledge of Spanish; to the contrary, it was earlier experience in study of Tagalog, Cebuano Visayan, and later as I wrote my dissertation, of Kapampangan, that gave me the impression that there were many aspects of speaking other Philippine languages which helped to make sense of how Zamboangueno worked. At the same time, to be sure, it was clear to me that Zamboangueno was quite unlike those other Philippine languages in some respects. At the time I had a very limited view of what later became the field known as creolistics, and certainly I had no other experience which would have made possible comparisons to other creoles. (I did do a seminar with Robert A. Hall, Jr. at Cornell in the latter half of the sixties, but this was a 'seminar' in title only).

In a review of the Whinnom monograph, Howard McKaughan raised criticism of Whinnom's data (McKaughan, 1958: 356). Agreeing with McKaughan, I used these same quotes, which I have repeated above, critically in my dissertation (Forman, 1972: 10-11, 18, 72). Later I found it encouraging to read similar criticism of Whinnom's data voiced by John Lipski (1992: 225, n. 3).

In the 1960s or 1970s I entertained no fear of endangerment to Zamboangueno. I did note that the language was quite open to influence from its contacts with English and with Tagalog, and although I didn't know much of anything about relexification at the time, in the light of change that one could observe in progress, I tossed out the suggestion that there might come a day in the future when Zamboangueno would be classified as a variety of 'Philippine Creole English' or 'Zamboanga Creole Tagalog'

if percentages of vocabulary items by source were to be the sole criterion (Forman, 1972: 16).

The lexicon does hold a metalinguistic interest for at least some speakers of Zamboangueno. One question that people are still asking in Zamboanga is the question of distribution of sources of lexical items. Commonly the question is: What percent Spanish / what percent Philippine (or Visayan, or Tagalog)? One speaker at the November 1999 Conference, Rev. Agapito Ferrero, CMF, refined this sort of commentary with information about Caribbean and Peruvian lexical items; he also noted that certain Romance vocabulary casually called ‘Spanish’ is really “Portuguese or Italian or from Picardia”. He added that military recruitment brought in Spanish of a rural character, from the south of Spain and from Western Andalusia. A similarly refined commentary on the origins of Philippine-sourced vocabulary remains to be developed, although a beginning has been made in work by Frake and Molony. Fr. Ferrero somewhat more generally, but less particularly, referred to that component of the lexicon as ‘Malay’. Given ongoing contact at least some Zamboanguenos have with Malay-speaking places like Brunei, this is not helpful. I understand that Fr. Ferrero means ‘Malay’ in some generic sense –as when José Rizal is referred to as “the pride of the Malay race”. But when actual Malay dialects are conflated with Philippine sources which are indeed Hesperonesian, but not ‘Malay’ in the more particular sense, themselves sometimes borrowing from Malay, the use can create confusion. When I was pressed to add my opinion on this topic of component sources in the lexicon of Zamboangueno, I responded that my figures were much like those reported by Frake, but that there was surely more work to be done, and that I would like to see the question applied to specific texts and to specific situations of speaking. Asking a fisherman about waves and the weather might well, as it had in my own experience (Forman, 1972: 27-29), increase the quantity of Philippine-source vocabulary, for example. Conversely, speaking as a Westerner to someone well-travelled and well-schooled might well provide the pressure which would increase the percentage of Spanish components in evidence.

Zamboanguenos, then, are interested in words. There is a Zamboangueno lexical entry for ‘word’, *palabra*. This receives an entry in Camins’ dictionary; he provides the gloss ‘word, promised word’ (Camins, 1999: 105). I believe that the word has a somewhat wider sense than the English, though; cf. Tagalog *salitâ*. In the glossary section of my dissertation, I glossed the same form ‘word, utterance’ (Forman, 1972: 294).

There is also, among many Zamboanguenos of my acquaintance, a very strong concern for spelling, for orthography. I was not yet out of the airport at Zamboanga City in November 1999 when I was asked: “Which is correct, *b* or *v*?” The question concerned the proper spelling of *Cha(b/v)acano*. I had not yet seen the beautiful poster prepared for the conference, which, in large, bold print, used the *v* spelling.

Prepared, though, by awareness that two extant Bible translations used *v* while another used *b* [the New York International Bible Society's (1981) *New Testament*, followed the earlier (1977) World Home Bible League's *Tres libros del Nuevo Testamento* lead with *El Nuevo Testamento. Chavacano*, while the Claretians' (1982) translation used *b*: *El Buen Noticia na chabacano*], I demurred at making a commitment, talking instead about how new software for word processing now rendered such pressures for orthodoxy less necessary than they were thought to have been in the past. I said that they should feel free to choose for themselves. That, of course, did not make the question go away. Mayor Lobregat, a key supporter of the 1999 conference, focussed attention on the *b/v* question for the language name this way:

To be frank about it, until recently Chabacano had been taken as a joke, even by some of those for whom it was the language of the cradle. One reason is that Chabacano is considered just a bastardized form of Spanish. In fact, the word 'Chavacano'—spelled with a 'V' as in victory— suggests crudeness, but today many Zamboanguenos, especially the champions of the local language, spell Chabacano with a 'B' as in Bravo to indicate its uniqueness to Zamboanga and to emphasize its Philippine and Zamboangueno character. (Mayor Lobregat's welcoming address, read by Councilwoman M^a Isabelle Climaco)

As an aside, I might note that our Jesuit hosts for this conference will perhaps remind us of the way the sobriquet 'Jesuit' was once used, and of how they came to choose it for their own appellation and made it what it is today. What we need to ask is, historically, where do such ideas come from? What has introduced them? What continues to support credence in them?

There is quite a bit more that might be said about orthography. No one asked me about the selection of *c* or *k*, as in *Cha(b/v)ac/kano*, although I might have, in the past, written the language name as *Chabakano*, much as I had written *Kapampangan* rather than *Capampañgan* or *Capañgañgan* (Forman, 1971: viii). There is among literate Zamboanguenos a decided orientation to Spanish orthography, and it is carried through in the Camins' work, despite what Camins says in the Introduction to his *Handbook and Dictionary* (1999):

This endeavor is one of the very few attempts to lay Chabacano de Zamboanga into print. The fundamental reason behind the dearth of manuscripts in Chabacano is simple: Chabacano is essentially a spoken dialect.

Let us not now attend to the circular reasoning here so that we can focus on what explanations there might be for orthographic decisions in Camins' work.

Besides, practitioners of the *written Chabacano* cannot agree among themselves on what alphabet to use. Similarly, pronunciations differ as they greatly depend upon the ethnical intonations of the vowels *a, e, i, o, u*. Likewise, the printed words vary in their spellings; among these, the use of the Pilipino alphabet *B, K, S, P*, and *Nyo* for the Spanish *V, C, Z, F*, and *Ñ*.

For the intrepidity of setting Chabacano in print, complete with an alphabet and parts of speech, the author had opened himself to a wide-range [*sic.*] of possible criticisms from both scholars and practitioners alike. That, as a matter of fact, would be very good since it would interest them also into putting down what they think is correct. Profound interest in the dialect, or on any other, would guarantee the survival of that dialect.

In this work, the author had used a simple rule: local words are spelled in their original spellings, while words of Spanish origin and their variants are spelled in accordance with the Spanish alphabet.

It is quite easy for those who are familiar with Spanish to learn Chabacano because most of the dialect's basic words are of Spanish origin. Other words in the dialect, although given different meanings and their spellings altered, also are of Hispanic origin. The rest of the words come from the various Philippine ethnic tribes.

(Camins, 1999: 5)

We would have no trouble finding a number of details here to comment on. One which should surely not pass without notice is the attitude so compatible with the science dimensions of linguistics, namely, that Camins welcomes criticisms and alternative interpretations. Would that he still lived, for it would be a pleasure to interact with him in such a way perhaps contributing to the preparation of a third edition of his handbook and dictionary.

But then we might also voice the regret that Camins draws his distinction between 'local' words and 'words of Spanish origin'. One would rather have it noted that in the present, all Chabacano words are local words. Further, 'original spellings' for the Philippine native words ignores historical fact such as the pre-Hispanic Devanagari-derived syllabary forms (Conklin, 1991; Bright, 1996; Court, 1996; Kuipers & McDermott, 1996). Possibly the disinterest in spelling with the 'Pilipino' alphabet reflects a certain antagonism to Tagalog and to Manila (see below). Finally, for me, at least, there is something rather dated and quaint, at least, about Camins' use of 'ethnic' and 'tribe' here (cf. Hymes, 1984 [1968]).

In keeping with my general observations, Camins is more concerned with the spelling of his 'words of Spanish origin' than he is with the way he spells the Philippine-source forms. In this he is no different from many other Zamboanguenos, including those who call themselves Chabacanistas or who are referred to by others as champions of the language. A fact which perhaps contributes to the lack of clarity is this: the phonology of Zamboangueno still awaits adequate description. Frake has noted that it is a system "encompassing many features of both [Spanish and

Philippine languages]” and he uses glottal catch and velar nasal to illustrate non-Spanish segments. Initial velar nasal is possible. Camins’ dictionary lists six forms with initial <Ñ>; the first four (spelled <Ñg> for initial velar nasal) are of Philippine origin (and my colleague Robert Blust calls attention to the semantic skewing common among Philippine languages on this feature in that these first four all contain an element ‘mouth / snout’):

Ñga-ñga ‘open-mouthed imbecile look’;
Ñgirit ‘senseless fixed grin’;
Ñgut-ñgut ‘a beating pain as in toothache’;
Ñgusu ‘snout’

and then the last two (where initial <Ñ> stands for initial palatal nasal) are of Spanish provenience, but clipped:

Ñor <Sp. ‘señor’ and *Ñora* <Sp. ‘señora’. (The full forms also are used in formal speech; the clipped forms are more familiar in use).

As for alphabetization sequence, we seem to have <N>, <Ñg>, <Ñ> and in at least one case (*nieto, nieta* ‘grandchild (male, female)’) we find <n>+<i>+<e> rather than <ñ>. Other Spanish lexical items (*niebla* ‘fog’ and *nieve* ‘snow’) do not seem to be used in Zamboanga –while the climate there reduces opportunity to talk about such things, there is certainly the possibility that Zamboangueno speakers might know the words. I just have no evidence on that point. They do not appear in Camins (1999).

Where the velar nasal seems to cause difficulty, that is, where inconsistencies are found in Camins’ treatment, is where the segment occurs in medial positions. Five examples illustrate the difficulty for a learner / user of the dictionary. The inclusions in parentheses are Camins’ pronunciation guides:

Bangui-bangui (*ba-NGUI-ba-GUI*) ‘inedible colored small crabs’. [Is *-GUI* a typo for *-NGUI*? Is *-NGUI-* the same as <Ñgui->? Or <Ñgi-> with the Spanish orthographic pattern of <gui> for [gi] rather than [gwi]?]

Punga (*pung-NGA*) ‘talking through the nose’. [Again *ng-* and *-NG*, where earlier we saw *ñg*. Is this /puŋa/ or /puŋa/?] (We find Samar-Leyte *pungas* ‘flat-nosed’; *punga* in Wolff’s Cebuano Dictionary is ‘experiencing difficulty in breathing from having too full a stomach or being pregnant’; *pungá* in Motus’s Hiligaynon dictionary seems closest: ‘a nasal manner of speech’.)

Sangit (*SANG-ngit*) ‘snagged’. [Again *ng* where earlier *ñg*; apparent gemination in the pronunciation guide.]

Sangña (*sang-GA*) ‘to block, snag’. [Is this *-G* rather than *-NG* a typo? Or is it really /ŋg/ that is being represented?] [What are we to make of the difference between <-ngñg-> here and <-ng>- or *-ngng-* above? And note the commonality semantically.]

Sangut (*san-GUT*) ‘sickle’. [Now here the spelling is <*n-G*>; is this really /n+/g/? and not /ŋ/ or /ŋg/?] (Yap & Bunye’s Cebuano dictionary shows *sánggot* ‘scythe’ –but their entry examples show use with a coconut, so ‘scythe’ is probably an error where they really mean ‘sickle’ or some other such short-handled tool; Wolff’s *A Dictionary of Cebuano Visayan* has *sanggut* ‘sickle’ and the entry associates the tool with palm toddy. Note /ŋg/ here clearly in the Cebuano; we can be confident that both Yap & Bunye’s and Wolff’s treatments are phonemic).

After some detailed and careful study, I am tempted to observe that Camins’ pronunciation guides will work for many entries only for those users of the dictionary who already know how to pronounce these words; they are well-nigh useless for a language learner. That problem should be addressed in a subsequent edition of this valuable work and must be remedied.

A second, predictable problem area for Camins’ dictionary is treatment of that phonological segment called glottal catch. Spanish, of course, does not have this phonological feature. It occurs in Zamboangueño medially intervocalically and in clusters, and it also occurs finally. It is phonemic. In final position Camins indicates it with <*h*> or <*H*>; I am not convinced that this is entirely consistent. I believe there are cases with a written <*H*> in Camins’ pronunciation guides where there is no glottal catch in spoken Zamboangueño. Medially, intervocalically, it is (sometimes) indicated with <-> (hyphen). Medially in clusters it is indicated with *h/H*. A distracting fact for the learner who is not closely familiar with Spanish orthography is found in that <*H*> initially is representation of no sound in words of Spanish origin but represents /h/ in words of Philippine origin. Furthermore words of Spanish origin with initial <*j*> are pronounced /h/, and sometimes words of Philippine origin with initial /h/ are spelled with <*j*>: Thus <*jendeh*> for /hende?/.

One twist I noted involves the derivational use of a suffix *-an* (or *-han*, where the stem ends in a vowel). Thus *Cuhi* (*cu-JIH*) ‘to catch’ (< Spanish *coger*) and *Cuhijan* (*cu-JI-han*) ‘catch if you can; game of children’. Almost as if he wanted to cover all possibilities, Camins also included *Cogida* ~ *Cugida* ‘the catch’ (with, note, <*g*> this time. His pronunciation guide gives (*co-GI-da*) and even for the variant with raised *u*, (*cu-GI-da*)). Thus we find *Pelejajan* ‘fight, quarrel’ and *Saludajan* ‘act of greeting or saluting one another’ alongside *Pulujan* ‘handle of knife or bolo’, *Pugajan* ‘hard palm timber’ and *Patujan* ‘goal, end-point of a race’. I am assuming that the last three are not of Spanish origin (although I am not at all certain of this); the point is that the <*j*> orthographic pattern carries throughout, regardless of the

assignment of ‘source’ to the word as a whole.

And then we find words of neither Spanish nor Philippine origin in the dictionary spelled with <j> and we remain uncertain as to how they are pronounced: *jacka* ‘world war II Japanese paper currency’; *juajuy* ‘a 37-number lottery’.

Camins’ dictionary also contains two forms with <j> following another consonant: *Bidju* (*bid-JUH*) ‘a short spear to catch fish under water’, and *Canje* (*CAN-je*) ‘broth of boiling rice’.

On top of that, the learner who is unable to recognize what is of Spanish origin and what is not is in serious trouble with respect to the use of this spelling system. Now all of this may be of interest to the phonologist or the lexicographer, but why should it make any difference to those concerned about Zamboangueño as an endangered language? I submit that it matters just because it makes the dictionary less than fully useful for the learner, whether that learner is insider or outsider, native or non-native.

While sitting ‘off-stage’ and waiting to be interviewed at one radio or TV station in Zamboanga, I overheard other broadcasters expressing a concern that I was yet another outsider come to criticize the way they used the language. One of these broadcasters expressed to me the view that Camins’ dictionary would have more value (for her) if it were an English-to-Chabacano dictionary rather than being what it is, Chabacano-to-English.

Permit me to turn now to a different kind of problem. I was asked a number of times in Zamboanga in 1999 what I thought of the idea of teaching Zamboangueño in the schools, either elementary or higher education. I was aware that there would be those in applied sociolinguistics who would jump to encourage such a move. I myself have been active in seeking bilingual education programs for various groups in Hawaii, and have been frustrated and distressed when officialdom in my home state resisted the idea.

Jeff Siegel, who has taken the initiative in developing a project he calls P.A.C.E., Pidgins and Creoles in Education, reports that “[s]ince the discipline [of Pidgin and Creole Studies] began, there have been calls to promote the use of pidgins and creoles in formal education (...)” (Siegel, 1993: 299). Siegel intends that this program contribute to “the distribution of detailed information about existing programs and their effectiveness to educators, community leaders and government officials throughout the region (Australia and the Southwest Pacific)”. Siegel expresses the hope that the information so provided “may be helpful in making more enlightened language planning decisions and in setting up new programs or improving existing ones” (ibid.: 307). One negative result mentioned by Siegel for evaluation of a program in Haiti has relevance to the topic of orthography in the dictionary discussed above: controversy over adopted orthography, and difficulties teachers encountered in mastering written Creole both were thought to have effected that evaluation (ibid.: 305). For more of relevance see also Siegel (1997).

Here is similarly oriented support for creoles in education from another linguist active in creole studies:

Education is potentially the most effective equalizer because it can reach children early enough in life. The issue of language acquisition and the associated sense of social and ethnic identity in relation to others is probably the most crucial, yet the most downplayed, element in educational systems. (Escure, 1997: 287)

Nettles & Romaine (2000: 186) observe that “[t]here is no doubt that absence of schooling in one’s own language can make maintenance [of that language] difficult”, but they go on to argue that:

Language movements cannot succeed if schools or states are expected to carry the primary burden of maintenance or revival. A frequent decision of language revival groups to start on the educational system can be misguided, particularly if the language in question is spoken primarily by those already past school age. (Nettles & Romaine, 2000: 187)

At present I do not have anything like a full picture of just who speaks Zamboangueño today. Frake (1980) using as a base the 1960 census, estimated 40,000 speakers on Basilan Island alone. I do not have current figures. Rodil (1999) cites 1990 figures showing that “the total number of Chavacano speakers in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago is 273,701”. A current brochure aimed at tourists states: “There are 442,345 inhabitants in the city [Zamboanga City], 76% of whom are Christians and 24% Muslims” (*Zamboanga Hermosa: The Garden City Gateway to your Memories*).

I do not believe that the situation is as dire as that focussed on in the Nettles & Romaine (2000) discussion just above. Indeed I had a lively and delightful conversation in Zamboanga with a group of elementary school children. I believe that there are many thousands of elementary school aged children in Zamboanga who speak the language. On the other hand, we do have the important report of Lauro C. Lleno, mentioned only by Fr. Bill Kreutz at the Ateneo de Zamboanga conference, who tells us that only 51% of the Ateneo students surveyed come from homes where Zamboangueño continues to be spoken. His findings came as a shock to at least some of those who read his report, and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that there are others who ought to have this information who have not read the report in question.

The population of the City of Zamboanga has grown very substantially in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The physical city itself seemed to be very much bigger than it was when I left it in 1964. I am not absolutely certain of the figures, but I understand that it has grown at least five times larger than it was then, with a current population approaching half a million people. Many of the newer residents

are refugees from embattled surrounding areas, where fighting between dissidents, those who would establish a Muslim state in the south, and the military created conditions that were too unsafe for them to stay where they had been. A re-reading of Frake (1980) would remind us that there are thousands of Zamboangueño speakers, both first-language and trade-language speakers who live / lived on Basilan. Frake's observations about the place of Zamboangueño among the languages in Yakan life should not be overlooked in our deliberations. In any case, the "Loyal and Valiant City" became a city of refuge anew in the days of Marcos's martial law. It also became the home of a large military base called Southcom, the Southern Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The landscape along the road I used to travel between an office in Baliwasan and the old Peace Corps training center in Ayala is now stunningly different visually from what I remember of the early 1960s and very considerably more populated. The view of the city from the air is quite different too.

One of the sources of concern for champions of Chabacano is this influx of young military to the city. One of the laments I heard frequently was a concern over what at least some have called 'Chabacano pul-pul' (*pulpul* is glossed in Camins' dictionary as 'substandard work'; the form also can be found in David Zorc & Rachel San Miguel's *Tagalog Slang Dictionary* (1991): an ignorant, useless person, with semantic shift from the Tagalog word which means 'blunt, dull point'; Wolff (1971: 796) gives the form as Cebuano with meanings 'not bright, unskilful, slow running, slow of movement, mentally slow'). This criticized way of talking is characterized by the preference or tendency to insert Tagalog pronouns, in particular, the second person singular, into otherwise Zamboangueño utterances. I was told by more than one person that this has resulted from young women near the Southcom base chatting with non-Zamboangueño soldiers and adopting their Tagalog. Examples were given by Ms. Lojean Valles-Akil in her presentation to the November 1999 conference. (She noted the possibility that Cebuano was a possible source in addition to Tagalog).

Ya mira yo CON IKAW alla.
 (I saw you there.)
 (Normal Zamboangueño: *Ya mira yo CONTIGO alla.*)

Other examples from my notes of her talk, but not found in the paper distributed to participants:

Que tal IKAW?
 (How are you?)
 (Normal Zamboangueño: *Que tal TU?*)

Quiere KA mira sine?
 (Do you want to watch a movie?)
 (Normal Zamboangueno: *Quiere TU mira sine?*)

Because I was also offered very similar (if not identical) examples by others (who presented them as shocking things to be horrified by), I would note the difference here between the use of *ikaw* in the two cases, and *ka* in the latter instance. The examples with *ikaw* strike me as ‘crashingly ungrammatical’ and rather unlikely –as though someone made them up to use as cautionary examples. The example with *ka* strikes me as a more likely, more believable case of code-switching. Another example of the what is to me odd sort: *DE IKAW este?* ‘Is this yours?’ (normal Zamboangueno: *DITUYO ba ‘ste?’*). I would expect Tagalog speakers trying to use Zamboangueno to say something like *De iyo este?*, or maybe *Kon iyo*, rather than *De ikaw*. After all, Tagalog distinguishes pronoun cases, and no Tagalog speaker would say something like (*ng*, or *sa*) *ikaw ito?* (normal Tagalog: *Sa iyo ba ito?* ‘Does this belong to you?’). Of course that brings up the point that the Tagalog ‘*sa*-pronoun’ *iyó* is isomorphic with the Zamboangueno first person singular *iyó*. Is that where this trouble starts?

A speech event which occurred just as the Ateneo de Zamboanga conference was beginning was pointedly reported to me. The report itself seems to me entirely reliable and credible. A former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences was looking for the room where the conference was to be held. He approached a group of students, and, according to his self-report, asked them: *Taqui ba el conferencia?* They replied: *Opò*. (His query ‘Is the conference (being held) here?’ was in Zamboangueno; their reply ‘Yes, sir’ was polite Tagalog). Of course there is much one would like to know about the contexts of this event: Who in particular were these individual students? What was the history of the students’ experience of interaction with the Dean? Did he usually speak Zamboangueno on campus to them? Or might this have been a first time, occasioned by the special event? and so on.

The children I mentioned speaking with above did not speak this sort of ‘Chabacano pulpul’ which I had been told young people were now speaking; the Zamboangueno the children used with me was lively and articulate but polite, and altogether charming. I did not hear a single Tagalog pronoun in perhaps thirty minutes of conversation.

Note one interesting development out of the rise of such attention to Zamboangueno’s contact with Tagalog: where Rev. Ferrero mentioned that there was an old idea of Zamboangueno as ‘español corrupto’, but that this had been rebutted, and where the students who questioned me in open forum were clearly probing for my attitudes with the respect to the notion of Zamboangueno as ‘bastard Spanish’, and where Mayor Lobregat in her introductory remarks opening the conference herself purposefully repeated that old saw that “Chabacano is considered just a

bastardized form of Spanish”, Valles-Akil made the argument, new to my hearing, that the formerly ‘pure’ Chabacano was only just now being ‘corrupted’ by Tagalog intrusion of this sort. Note that Camins argued in his handbook:

There might be a pure Tagalog, Cebuano, *Subanen* or even a pure *Sama* dialect. But there just cannot be a pure Chabacano because the dialect was born out of necessity, of an admixture of tribes, races, and cultures –who were forced by circumstances to live together, dialogue with one another, and to procreate a distinct breed of more tolerant, hospitable, compassionate, less bellicose, and less rapacious Filipinos.

(1999: 5)

There are two more points, related to the issues of language policy and planning on the one hand, and to our knowledge of Zamboangueño on the other, which I wish to touch on before I close. The first involves a question of the structure and use of Zamboangueño which native speakers have been addressing. The second involves a question of structure and use which I have not heard taken up by any but outsiders. In raising these two points I do not wish to trespass on the line drawn by our conference organizers; it is my conviction that any linguistics is, or ought to be, sociolinguistics, as William Labov once said (e.g., 1972: 184). The two points of syntax I want to discuss are matters of sociolinguistics in that how the data for discussing them are to be gathered, and how the investigation proceeds, are both matters for careful reflection on how people talk to one another. In that way I hope to avoid merely talking about “topics which are strictly grammatical in nature”, but focus attention instead on how what we know, or don’t know, about how Zamboangueño works has impact or potential impact on attitudes about the language and about action aimed at supporting maintenance of the language. And what we know about the language in part is a function of how we interact with speakers of the language (Briggs, 1986).

The first of these two points is the question of passive: does Zamboangueño have passive voice? This has been a lively, although somewhat vexed, topic in the discussion in recent years of other Philippine languages. Many scholars have taken up the idea that Philippine languages are ergative, that an ergative analysis works better than the old ones did. But I have not yet heard discussion of Chabacano as ergative. What *has* been said, if anything, on this topic? Zamboangueño speakers and champions *have* entered this fray. Camins (1999: 12-13) for one planted his feet firmly and insisted: “In Chabacano there is no passive voice. If ever it is desired our forefathers would express it in Spanish in which they are conversant”.

Now, in my opinion, when we talk about something a language *does not have*, we are in a certain sense engaging in talk more about ourselves, what we know, what we expect or what we look for, than we are talking about the language under investigation. Of course I do not mean to neglect the sense in which description is

always comparison. At the same time I want to express a commitment to the sort of balance which comes from resolutely fixing one's attention on what is there.

And what is there in Zamboanga is more than one language. In that respect, I have no quarrel with Camins' answer. Camins does well to remind us of the multilingual nature of the common repertoire. Nonetheless, I find interesting the example Camins uses to illustrate his claim:

The criminal was killed by soldiers. (English passive)

El criminal fue matado por los soldados. (Spanish passive)

El maga soldao ya mata con el criminal. (Chabacano active)

What I take notice of here are the following points: Camins asserts that his forefathers would have used the Spanish in which they were fluent. Perhaps so. But today there are many in Zamboanga who are not fluent at all in Spanish. I would say that there are very many more who are fluent in English. Then note that Camins (writing in English) *begins* with an example in English. Next we see what I take to be a Spanish translation from the English, however normal an instance of Spanish it may be (and I am in no position to evaluate that). The Chabacano form which appears third, however, illustrating Camins claim –by what does not show up– is a sentence of the form SVO. Now, I am not denying that SVO sentences occur in Zamboangueno; they do. In my opinion, however, VSO is the more unmarked order. Often in my experience, an SVO sentence results from translation of an English sentence that was 'there' first. I have noticed that a high percentage of the radio news-script texts in my possession are in the form SVO. These scripts were collected in 1999. They are, I assume, translated from news leads from elsewhere, most probably originally in English or in Tagalog.

Valles-Akil (1999) explored the question, how similar is Chavacano syntax to that of other Philippine languages? Her method was to make use of a questionnaire developed for eliciting syntactic forms in Philippine languages (Constantino, 1965) and present Chabacano translations in comparison with other translations elicited for Tagalog, Cebuano, Sama Balangingi and Subanon. In the copy of her paper distributed to conference participants, Valles-Akil concluded:

(...) in as far as its noun marking is concerned, Chavacano's syntax is clearly of Malayo-Polynesian character. Although it does not lend to the Malayo-Polynesian passive sentence construction, its adherence to the Malayo-Polynesian word order is obvious as shown by the position and function of its noun marker/s in a sentence.

Up to a point, I have no difficulty agreeing with what Ms. Valles-Akil is arguing, and I too found that there were aspects of Zamboangueno syntax which could be compared rather directly to that of other Philippine languages such as Tagalog or

Cebuano. The final chapter of my dissertation was a more developed attempt to make this point (Forman, 1972: 232-237) than I can take the time to make here.

As one brief example: one might construct a chart of noun markers of case, as below:

Zamboangueno		Tagalog		Cebuano	
commons	propers (pers)	commons	propers (pers)	common	propers (pers)
<i>el</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ang</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ang</i>	<i>si</i>
<i>de~di</i>	<i>de~di</i>	<i>ng</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>ug</i>	<i>ni</i>
<i>con(el)</i>	<i>con</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>kang</i>

Of course, things start getting more complex quickly as one develops such comparisons and this is not the whole picture by a long shot.

The syntactic work done so far has not yet produced a clear description of Zamboangueno syntax. Two examples I present below are perhaps functionally more like ‘passive’ than they are formally, but it is syntactic (and discourse) phenomena like these which call out for a finer-grained description.

Fr. Ferrero (1999) provided an interesting anecdote which offers one of the relevant examples. He was making the point that the newly arrived Spanish-speaker “feels at home with chavacano and thinks he speaks correctly”, but then “gets his great bukul” (i.e., is in for a lump on the head) when he boards the *lancha* (‘ferry’, ‘launch’) to Isabela and asks the attendant:

(version in Ferrero’s paper)
Libre este asiento?

(version as in my notes as he spoke):
Libre ba ‘ste?

and she replies:

Jendeh, Padre, ta paga ese.

Ay, hende?, Padre! ESE(.) TA PAGA!

Then Ferrero notes in his written version: “(libre in Spanish is NOT OCCUPIED)” Clearly the boat’s attendant took it as ‘free, gratis, complementary, no charge’. What I want to know is, what is the proper analysis of *Ese ta paga* here?

Later, reading in a book which Councilwoman Climaco brought to the airport for me on the day I left Zamboanga, I found my second example. The book I was reading is a book about the life of the late and much-loved mayor of Zamboanga City, Cesar Climaco. A moment after he had been shot down on a city street, patrolman Benjamin Arquiza, the policeman who had just turned away from talking with the

mayor, quoted others present as saying about the assassinated Climaco:

Ya tira con el mayor .

(The mayor has been shot. / (Someone) shot the mayor.) (Climaco et al., 1997: 16)

The C.C.C. Foundation volume publication where this appears commemorates the 13th death anniversary of the late Mayor Cesar C. Climaco, and reprints many articles from *Cesar: Champion of the Underdog* (1991). The particular piece from which I have quoted was originally a news story in the *Zamboanga Times*, 17 November 1984, three days after the assassination. The first gloss is contained in the story. The second gloss is my addition. (The book also reprints a news story about the murder of patrolman Arquiza which took place not a very long time after).

Algun is a word that does exist in the repertoires of Zamboangueno speakers (Forman, 1972: 242, there given as *algun* and *algun-as* and glossed as ‘certain’) and in Camins (1999: 37) one does find *algo* ‘something’ and *algunus* ‘someone’. I would note here that the policeman is not reported as using it, or any other representation of an agent, in this utterance –and *that* may well be the kind of omission that a description really ought to include. My own *Sprachgefühl* for Zamboangueno, unfortunately, does not permit me to say more at this point.

The other problematic topic, the one I noted I have *not* heard being discussed in Zamboanga or even in the wider context of linguistics being done in the Philippines is the question of whether or not Chabacano, and Zamboangueno in particular, have serial verbs. My idea of why this matters (at the level of sociolinguistic or ethnographic linguistic treatment of our subject) is that insiders would not permit the level of inadequacy one finds in the profession’s treatment of the topic, and, at the same time, the community might benefit from knowing two things: one, the level of interest among scholars; and two, the ways in which the system of their language is like that of a set of other languages (which, as I understand it, does *not* include Spanish).

Briefly, the problem is this: John McWhorter’s book *Towards a New Model of Creole Genesis* (1997) contains a survey of serial verb constructions in creole languages. McWhorter presents his findings in three categories: creoles with a wide range of serial verb constructions, creoles with a limited range of serial verb constructions, and creoles with no serial verbs. He places Chabacano and Zamboangueno in the latter category. In doing so, he makes it clear that he is relying on data “adapted from Jansen, Koopman, and Muysken 1978”. When I checked that source, I was surprised to find that those authors did indeed make such a claim, but presented absolutely no support for that claim as ‘data’. Some years ago, I had noted (to my initial pleasure) that Zamboangueno appeared twice, under the rubric ‘Philippine Creole Spanish’, in *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey*; this was the neglected language of our concern making ‘the big time’ in linguistics. Terrific. Then

to my disappointment, I found that the two major figures in creolistics citing Philippine Creole Spanish (Bickerton, 1988; Muysken, 1988) both seemed to get things wrong in their treatment. Subsequent to discovering this, I presented a paper at the *Sixth International Conference on Austronesian Languages* (1991), and later published a critique in *Oceanic Linguistics* (Forman, 1993). In that paper, I presented my argument for why I thought both Pieter Muysken and Derek Bickerton had gotten things about Zamboangueño wrong. To my knowledge I am the only one who raised such complaints. I hope that does not mean that my criticism is wrong, only that no one else noticed. Bickerton has communicated with me about the paper, but neither Bickerton nor Muysken has published anything which would make me change my mind about the critique I offered. McWhorter seems to have missed Forman (1993). (A colleague in creole studies, Miriam Meyerhoff, called it clearly and explicitly to his attention after he made a dismissive comment on CreoList about “an obscure article” showing that “even Philippine Creole Spanish has some [serialization], despite there being none in the substrate languages”.) Details of this argument might carry us too far into territory which the conference organizers wanted us to avoid. In that case, I shall be happy to convey, to any who want to know, relevant data and further details of this argument.

In closing, I want to turn to a founding figure in the study of language death, Nancy Dorian. In Grenoble & Whaley’s recent volume (1998), *Endangered Languages*, Dorian observes that “languages are seldom admired to death, but are frequently despised to death” (Dorian, 1998: 3). Expanding on this view, Dorian says:

(...) languages have the standing that their speakers have. If the people who speak a language have power and prestige, the language they speak will enjoy high prestige as well. If the people who speak a language have little power and low prestige, their language is unlikely to be well thought of. Because the standing of a language is so intimately tied to that of its speakers, enormous reversals in the prestige of a language can take place within a very short time span. (ibid.: 3-4)

To me, the people who speak Zamboangueño remain people very well thought of. One wonders, however, if their concern about the standing of their language is not the wilting of the canary –an indication that things have changed and they no longer perceive themselves as having power and prestige. Possibly, we might speculate, the assassination of Cesar Climaco was a turning point. The great increase of military activity in the area has had effect on the environment. Frake has written recently about the need for one who travels in the area to become competent in what has been called ‘checkpoint Tagalog’ (Frake, 1998, where Frake refers to “military-checkpoint-interaction ritual”). “In the more usual cases the group that exercises military or political power over others will establish its own language as the language of governance in its contacts with those others” (Dorian, op. cit.: 4-5). It is

noteworthy that the Philippine military has nothing like the US military's Defense Language Institute (in Monterey, California) where students study hundreds of different languages. What if the Philippine military were to study and teach at least select members of its forces to speak Zamboangueño competently and to promote them for learning to do so? It seems to me noteworthy that Zamboangueños in my recent experience pointed often to the military when they talked about the endangerment of Zamboangueño.

Dorian's article, however, is really much more about linguistic than about military matters, and these are the considerations we as linguists might most take to heart. She focuses attention on the history of language and language treatment in Europe, and in particular on the rise of standard languages. She isolates European beliefs about language which she thinks are "likely to have had an unfavourable impact on the survival of indigenous languages" (p. 10):

The cumulative effect of the 'ideology of contempt', of ignorance about the complexity and expressivity of indigenous languages, of a belief in linguistic social Darwinism, and of a belief in the onerousness of bi- or multilingualism converge to bear down most of the languages spoken by populations without wealth or power. They are heavy weights for small populations in particular to cast off, and few have so far been able to do so. (Dorian, 1998: 12)

Dorian writes about the survey done by the Abbé Gregoire in 1790 and his finding that various regional speech forms were labeled coarse and stupid, and were considered to keep the people ignorant and superstitious (Dorian, 1998: 7, citing Grillo, 1989: 31, 174). We might ask if there is any connection between the attitudes reported there and such phenomena as the origin of the label 'Chabacano' in the arena of our concern. Do we know how old 'Chabacano' is as label for the language?

Dorian offers a caution that we had best take to heart:

Europeans who came from polities with a history of standardizing and promoting just one high prestige speech-form carried their 'ideology of contempt' for subordinate languages with them when they conquered far-flung territories, to the serious detriment of indigenous languages. And in addition to a language ideology favoring a single normalized language, derived from the history of national language standardization in their homelands, Europeans espoused other ideologies that exacerbated their contempt for whatever unstandardized vernaculars they encountered. (Op. cit., p. 9)

One can readily see where Chabacano would have been vulnerable to such ideology. At the same time we today must recall our discipline's history of "reducing a language to writing", and other idealizations, which we use the reductions of 'science' to justify, and be cautious about the kinds of recommendations our own

ideologies of language, sometimes yet unexamined, we offer to the people who speak Chabacano and wish to preserve and nourish it. Whatever we do, we need to keep mindful of the Chabacano language in its context, not severed from that context of the lives of its speakers, not studied or preserved just as an object of interest in its own right, but as something still very central to the lives of its speakers.

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