

# The Puzzling Case of Chabacano: Creolization, Substrate, Mixing and Secondary Contact

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Commonly known as “Chabacano” are the different varieties of the Spanish-based Creole in the Philippines. Until the present, the (socio-)historical origin of the Chabacano varieties is far from being entirely explained (e.g. Lipski 1988 and 1992). In addition, nearly all publications on Chabacano refer to Zamboangueno and not to the variety of Ternate (Manila Bay) which is the oldest variety and in many aspects more conservative (cf. Steinkrüger forthcoming). Also, the constant contact between India, Macau and the Philippines has been neglected. Consequently, it seems to be necessary to classify the morphosyntactical features and lexical items of Chabacano as of Malayo-Portuguese origin or of the (Mexican) Spanish superstrate origin, or finally as of Philippine origin by later contact. The analysis of these features and their comparison with Portuguese-based creoles in Asia could also lead to more clarity explaining the (socio-)historical origin of Chabacano.

It is the aim of this paper to discuss some external and internal aspects of the Chabacano varieties in the Philippines, considering their historical background (e.g. Francisco 2002) and focussing on morphosyntactic ‘typical’ features of creole languages considering Zamboangueno in Mindanao but also the variety spoken in Ternate (Manila Bay). Nevertheless, it is true that Chabacano has in some respect a mixed character by language contact in the Philippines, but this fact is not an argument against its original structure as a creole (against the status as an “intertwined language”). Besides, code switching as in example (1) is quite widespread among young speakers:

(1) ZAMBOANGUEÑO<sup>1</sup>

<i>Dale</i>	<i>kumigo</i>	<i>dituyo</i>	<i>cellphone number</i>
Give	OBJ.1	POSS.2	cellphone number

<i>para</i>	<i>I can call you later.</i>
so-that	I can call you later.

‘Give me your cellphone number so that I can call you later.’

The paper will focus on selected lexical items and morpho-syntactic features in both varieties of Chabacano. It is then the aim to compare these features with other Spanish-based Creoles (Papiamentu and Palenquero), other creoles in Asia with Malayo-Portuguese base; for example:

- Comparison of the pronominal system (e.g. Ternateño shows more similarities with Indo-Portuguese and Macaísta than with Zamboangueno).
- Differential object-marking with the particle *kun* in Zamboangueno and Ternateño (similarities with Spanish or with creoles which share the same substrate?).
- Aspects concerning the function and form of the preverbal TMA-markers (*ta-*, *ya-*, *ay-* in Zamboangueno and *ta-*, *a-*, *di-* in Ternateño).

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations in the glossing are used: ART – article, COMPL – complementizer, DET – determiner, IMPFV – imperfective, IRR – irrealis, LOC – locative, OBJ – object-marker, PL – plural, POSS – possessive, PRF – perfect.

## 1. Preliminary remarks

If we investigate the origin of Chabacano we must go beyond the current facts that its lexicon consists mainly of Spanish vocabulary and that its geographical distribution is restricted to the Philippines. Instead we must go back to the early colonial contacts in Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries when Portuguese and Malay – more exactly restructured forms of them – were used by Asians and Europeans to communicate: “The only languages which achieved any currency as *lingue franche* in the Eastern Seas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were Portuguese and Malay, and most European traders, including the English, made use of Portuguese.” (Whinnom 1956: 7) Certainly, Malay was already used in Manila and Central Philippines before the arrival of the Spanish (cf. Wolff 1989). Compared to Portuguese, Spanish never had the same impact in SE-Asia (cf. Lipski et al. 1996) and its usage was restricted only to the Philippines.

Taking into account that the former Spanish colony was regularly connected with other Portuguese possessions in Asia, we shouldn't be surprised why still nowadays Chabacano and the Luso-asiatic creoles share a lot of structural features (Whinnom 1956: 9, Fn. 21): “The similarities in grammar and syntax, and even vocabulary of the Spanish contact vernaculars in the Philippines and Indo-Portuguese, are so many [...] that we can be quiet certain that Ternateño [in the Moluccas; PS] did develop out of the common Portuguese pidgin of the Eastern Seas.”

In the following we are going to compare three of these common structural features, underlying the argument, that Chabacano and other Luso-asiatic varieties really have a lot in common and that Philippine features are probably quite recent.

## 2. Personal pronouns

The internal and paradigmatical structure of Chabacano personal pronouns shows the historical connection of the Philippines with other regions in the world, especially with Portuguese possessions in Asia. The pronouns also demonstrate that a clear-cut distinction between Portuguese and Spanish during the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century did not exist, at least for their restructured layers. For example *vosotros* ‘you (PL)’ did not exist in Portuguese but it is obviously the protoform of this pronoun in the Portuguese-based creoles in Malacca, Macau and India.

The subject pronouns of the following Iberoromance-based creoles will be compared in the following table (in exactly in this order): Ternateño = T, C = Caviteño, Macaísta = M (Santos Ferreira 1978: 23), PK = Papia Kristang (Baxter 1988: 52-53), Indo-Portuguese (Norteiro) = IP (Dalgado 1906: 154-155), Papiamentu = PP (Munteanu 1996: 295), Palenquero = P (Pérez Tejedor 2004: 56) and Zamboangueño = Z:

**Table 1. Free subject pronouns in Iberoromance-based creoles**

singular							
T	C	M	PK	IP	PP	P	Z

yo	yo	iou	yo	eu	mi	yo	(i)yo
bo, tédi	vos	vôs	bos	ós	bo	bo	(e)bós, tu, ustéd
éli	éle	ele	eli	éll(a)	ele	ele	éle

plural							
T	C	M	PK	IP	PP	P	Z
mihótro	nisós	nôs	nus	nós	nos	suto	kitá (incl.) kamé (excl.)
tédi(s)	vusós	vosôtro	bolotu	usôt	boso	enú (polite), utére	kamó, ustédes
lohótro	ilós	ilôtro	olotu	illôt	nan	ané	silá

In the table are only listed the full forms, not weak nor cliticized forms. With the exceptions of Palenquero and Zamboangueno where the whole set of the plural is taken from Niger-Kongo and Malayo-Polynesian respectively, we can assume that the proto-paradigm of all Iberoromance-based creoles was the following:

**Table 2. Hypothetical proto-paradigm of free subject pronouns in Iberoromance-based**

singular	plural
<i>yo/mi</i> ‘I’	<i>nosotros/misotros</i> ‘we’
<i>vos</i> ‘you’	<i>vosotros</i> ‘you (PL)’
<i>ele</i> ‘s/he’	<i>(e)losotros</i> ‘they’

It seems that Whinnom was right that a “[...] mixed Portuguese-Spanish Pidgin [...]” (Whinnom 1956: 9) was the base of Chabacano. And the sharp cutted terms “Spanish-based” or “Portuguese-based” do not grasp obviously the linguistic situation of the linguistic situation of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Iberian colonies.

### 3. Differential object-marking (DOM) in Chabacano

One striking feature of Chabacano morphosyntax is the marking of objects with the lexical item ‘with’ which is phonologically *kon* or *kung*. It is the element itself and also its distribution which attract the linguist’s interest. As for the origin of the marker there are several theories in the literature including my own view (which is point 1 in the below list). In the following we try to resume some arguments and observations concerning the object-marker *kon* in Chabacano.

On the origin of this marker there are the following arguments which not always contradictory but mutually additional:

1. (Partially) Spanish origin: In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> some comitative objects are marked with *con*, as e.g. with the verbs *ver* ‘see’ or *matar* ‘kill’. Chabacano, which arose in this time, could have grammaticalized this marker.
2. Luso-asiatic origin: In many lusoasiatic creoles (e.g. Malacca, Macau, Batavia/Jakarta etc.) *com* is an object-marker (see also Endruschat’s essay on *cum* in Afro-Portuguese).

As in Chabacano, *ku* in Papia Kristang marks “accusative, recipient, comitative, instrumental and goal.” (Baxter 1988: 167). Only the comitative in Chabacabco is expressed by *kumpanyéro* and *ubán* respectively and not by *kon*. Once again, this is not surprising since at least until around 1800, the Philippines had constant contact with Portuguese possessions in Asia. The place of origin could be South-India from where it spread over to other creoles in Asia (hypothesis by Koontz-Garboden & Clements).

3. Hokkien-Chinese via Malay origin: Baxter (1995) argues that at least in the Portuguese-based creole of Malacca *ku* was functionally influenced by the Bazaar Malay *sama* ‘with’.
4. Philippine origin: Recently, Mauro Fernández argued in a paper (informed by pers. comm.) that *kon* has its origin in phonologically and functionally similar markers for objects before proper names as *kay* and *kiná*. But we should say that there functionally some differences.

It seems that all four explanations are a part of the truth and that historically, some of them conditioned one to the other. If we look at the marker itself, we see that phonologically, the marker is identical in nearly all luso-asiatic creoles – except in some varieties of Indoportuguese where there is *para* ‘for’ – and in Chabacano. This is a further argument of a former relationship of these creoles in Asia:

**Table 3. Object-markers in some Ibero-Asian creoles**

creole	object-marker
Ternateño	kung
Zamboangueno	kon, kun
Macaísta	ko
Malacca	ku

A further issue is the synchronic distribution of the marker. So far, we have made some general observations concerning the application of the marker:

1. Human (animate) objects are most frequently marked with *kon* (e.g. examples 4–11). But inanimate topicalized objects also could be marked (e.g. examples 2 and 13)
2. Recipients (nearly always humans) and (human) objects of transitive constructions are both marked with *kon*. As in Spanish, the language tends to differentiate primary and secondary objects (cf. examples 7 and 8).
3. Double-object-constructions as in Atlantic Creoles are always ungrammatical (but also as in Spanish).
4. Double-marking of objects (that is for example including the theme) in ditransitive constructions is possible but rare (= marked; cf. example 3). In Spanish this would be ungrammatical.

Examples:

- (2) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Manga paharyador lang ta-pwéde bisita koneste lugar.*  
 PL hunter only IMPFV-can visit OBJ.this place  
 ‘The place was visited only by hunters (of birds).’
- (3) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Ya-dale yo kuneste libro kunel hente.*  
 PRF-giveI OBJ.this book OBJ.DET man  
 ‘I gave this book to the man.’
- (4) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Ya mira yo el hente ya-embuna konel iruq.*  
 PRF see I DET man PRF-hit OBJ.DET dog  
 ‘I saw how the man hit the dog.’
- (5) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Konosé le konese muhér.*  
 know s/he OBJ.that woman  
 ‘S/he knows that women.’
- (6) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Paula ta-ama kun Pedro.*  
 Paula IMPFV-love OBJ Pedro  
 ‘Paula loves Peter.’
- (7) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Si Paula ta-libá libro kon Pedro.*  
 A Paula IMPFV-carry book OBJ Pedro  
 ‘Paula carries Peter the/a book.’
- (8) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Ta-liba yo un butelya de agwa kun mi nana.*  
 IMPFV-carry I ART bottle of water OBJ my mother  
 ‘I carry a bottle of water to my mother.’
- (9) ZAMBOANGUEÑO (Forman 1972: 157)  
*Ya-dále abíso el maga páharo konel*  
*maga peskadór.*  
 PRF-give warning DET PL bird OBJ.DET  
 PL fisherman  
 ‘The birds gave a warning to the fishermen.’
- (10) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Dale komigo agwa!*  
 give OBJ.ISG water  
 ‘Give me water!’

- (11) CAVITEÑO  
*María ya-regalá un relós cun su nobio.*  
 Mary PRF-give ART watch OBJ her boyfriend  
 ‘Mary gave her boyfriend a watch.’
- (12) ZAMBOANGUEÑO (Forman 1972: 199)  
*Ya-mirá silá síne.*  
 PRF-see they movie  
 ‘They saw a movie.’
- (13) ZAMBOANGUEÑO (Forman 1972: 157)  
*Ya-asé le kebrá konel báso.*  
 PRF-cause s/he break OBJ.DET glass  
 ‘He broke the glass.’
- (14) ZAMBOANGUEÑO (Forman 1972: 199)  
*Ya-mirá le el páto.*  
 PRF-see s/he DET duck  
 ‘He saw the dug.’
- (15) ZAMBOANGUEÑO (Forman 1972:167)  
*Ya-saká le konel muhér konel dragón.*  
 PRF-seize he OBJ.DET woman OBJ.DET dragon  
 ‘He seized the woman from the dragon.’

#### 4. The TMA-markers in Chabacano

What makes it sometimes difficult to name a given feature in Chabacano “typically creole” is the fact that some Philippine languages, as do Tagalog or Cebuano, share structurally these features with many creole languages, like for example there is no copula for equative constructions.

This is also exactly the case if we look at the preverbal TMA-markers in Chabacano. As in many Philippine languages they are preverbal and behave morphologically as prefixes. Since some data in Schuchardt (1883) and Whinnom (1956) show that the marker could have been interrupted by other elements, we can assume that this status is maybe recent. So it seems that Chabacano follows a Philippine blueprint.

At the synchronic level, already Whinnom (1956: 92-3), referring to López’ description of Tagalog grammar, names the functions of the Chabacano verb with its TMA-markers as in Tagalog, admitting that “contact-vernacular grammar is not Tagalog grammar but in every single instance represents a simplification of Tagalog practice.” (Whinnom 1956: 98). Functionally, the three forms of the marked verb in Chabacano coincide with those as we know them from Tagalog, where affixed finite verbs do occur also in three forms, namely as irrealis, imperfective and perfect (see Schachter 1993: 1419).

But as in the case of the object-marking, it is necessary to compare the structure of the varieties of Chabacano with other Iberoromance-based creoles in Asia and even in other areas if we assume that creolization took place during the three first centuries of Portuguese and Spanish colonization worldwide. A selection of some creoles of Asia is compiled in the following table:

**Table 4. TMA-markers in some Iberoromance-based creoles in Asia**

Creole	imperfective	perfect(ive)	irrealis	completive	combinations
Zamboangueno	ta	ya	ay	(kabá)	-
Ternateño	ta	(y)a	dí	(kabá)	-
Indo-Portuguese (Bombay)	ta	ja	di	kaba	(-?)
Macaísta	ta	ja	lô	kaba	(-?)
Papia Kristiang	ta	ja	lo(gu)	kaba	-
Batavia/Jakarta	ta	ja	lo(gu)	kaba	(-?)

Unlike Atlantic creoles or those in the Indian Ocean, the combination of the markers are impossible or highly restricted as Hancock (1975: 221) argues: “They [the tense and aspect markers; PS] may not combine as freely as in other creoles, although further research is needed before their behaviour may be fully determined.” Examples of application you find in the following:

- (16) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Y el bataq ya-akusta na kama kun pehro y ta-durmi.*  
 And DET child PRF-lay LOC bed with dog and IMPF-sleep  
 ‘And the child lays in bed with a dog and is sleeping.’
- (17) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Ya-uyi yo ta-lyura el dalagita.*  
 PRF-hear I IMPF-cry DET girl  
 ‘I heard the girl crying.’
- (18) CAVITEÑO  
*Di-anda yo na plaza.*  
 IRR-go I LOC market/place  
 ‘I will go to the market.’
- (19) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*Ya-atrasá era le na bus.*  
 PRF miss MOD s/he LOC bus  
 ‘He would have missed the bus’.
- (20) ZAMBOANGUEÑO  
*El pehro ta-buska konel palakaq.*

- DET dog IMPFV-search OBJ.DET frog  
 ‘The dog is looking for the frog.’
- (21) TERNATEÑO  
*Kel péhro a-murdé kung kel muhér.*  
 DET dog PRF-bite OBJ DET women  
 ‘The dog bit the woman’
- (22) TERNATEÑO  
*Ta-kedá éle na Maníla.*  
 IMPFV-live s/he LOC Manila  
 ‘S/he lives in Manila.’
- (23) TERNATEÑO  
*Kung yo ta-kedá ríko, di-merká yo kása.*  
 COMPL I IMPFV-become rich IRR-buy I house  
 ‘If I were/became rich, I would buy a house.’
- (24) TERNATEÑO  
*A-krese yo na Barra.*  
 PRF-grow.up I LOC Ternate  
 ‘I grew up in Ternate’.

## 5. The different contact situations of Chabacano

It should be clear that the modern varieties of Chabacano are not the result of one single contact scenario and all the layers of on single origin. It’s more a complex together of different contact situations in the past and in the present.

### 5.1 Creolization

Ternateño arrived already as a creolized language in the Philippines (see Whinnom 1956 & Rafael 1978): “[...] the community in which the contact vernacular became creolized, that is the Ternateño community.” (Whinnom 1956: 10) or: “[...] the first of the Spanish contact vernaculars in the Eastern Seas arose in Ternate, and had already achieved creolization before the evacuation of the island by garrison and Christian inhabitants.” (Whinnom 1956: 10). This is unlike the case of Zamboangueño, where creolization took also place in situ (this is the assumption of Warren 1981). Here, escaped slaves, originated from the Visayas and also Malayic-speaking islands contributed to the heavy substrate influence of Hiligaynon (especially the pronoun-system) and also Cebuano in the language (for all these features cf. Frake 1971 and Bowen 1971, Bunye and Yap 1971, Wolfende 1971). But can doubt this theory since all varieties of Chabacano are structurally alike and all of them share typical features with the other Lusoasiatic Creoles.

In addition, since the varieties of Chabacano share many structural features, it is quiet probable that they were formerly in contact with each other; this is at least the case for Cavite and Zamboanga via navigation. Maybe an older creole in Zamboanga was overlayed by a more



recent one: The language in Zamboanga is phonologically and lexically closer to modern Spanish or Caviteño than Ternateño.

So, finally, what are the substrate languages of Chabacano? Can we really apply a mere sociolinguistic definition of a substrate as defined by Holm (1988: 5): “Usually those with less power (speakers of the substrate languages) are more accommodating and use words from the language of those with more power (the superstrate), although the meaning, form, and use of these words may be influenced by the substrate languages.” Were the substrate languages of Chabacano really with less power? On the grammatical and lexical level we have at least three different substrates of Chabacano:

- Malayic (also in its restructured form)
- Visayan languages (only Zamboangueño, e.g. pronouns)
- Hokkien Chinese (influences on grammar, e.g. object-marking)

## 5.2 Intertwining

In the case of Zamboangueño, some scholars even claimed the status as a mixed or intertwined language:

There are languages that justify a type of of ML [mixed language; P.S.] comprising mixed creoles. An example is Chavacano, also known as Zamboangueño or Mindanao Creole Spanish [...] widely spoken on the island Mindanao in the Philippines [...]. The source of most lexical and grammatical morphemes is Spanish Creole, but the syntactic framework and relations between categories (for instance animacy and definiteness, aspect) tend to follow an Austronesian blueprint. Austronesian grammatical morphemes include plural markers, animate definite articles, past-tense existential verbs, and transitive derivation markers, while the pronoun system is mixed: The singular pronouns are all based on Spanish Creole. In the plural, Austronesian forms seem to co-exist with Spanish Creole forms (e.g. second person *kamo* alongside *ustedes*), but the first person plural, Austronesian forms, which mark the exclusive/inclusive distinction (*kamí*, *kitá*) seem to be preferred. (Matras & Bakker 2003: 11)

A part from the the sociolinguistic setting – usually a (exactly) bicultural search of identity – also structurally, this assumption seems to be highly problematic. The criticism of the above quotation consists in the following points:

- a. Why most grammatical morphemes should have a Spanish Creole source? This is only the case for the TMA-markers of the verb; all the rest is Austronesian.
- b. The relations between the categories of animacy, definiteness and aspect is already known in Spanish. It's not necessarily Austronesian.
- c. Other things are not entirely clear: With the term “animate definite article” the authors probably refer to *si* before proper names as subjects. But past-tense existential verbs, why should they be of Austronesian origin? The only ones known to me are *nuay* (< Span. *no hay*) and *estaba* (< Span. *estaba* ‘was, stayed’). The latter is actually only used as a locative of the past.

- d. As to the personal pronouns: Also in the singular, Austronesian forms are in use: instead of *tu*, many young speakers in Zamboanga use the Visayan *ka* after verbs.

### 5.3 Secondary contact or adstrate

We can assume, that the “Philippine character” of Chabacano is a more recent phenomenon which we call “secondary contact” or “adstrate”. As for Ternateño, the impact of the neighbouring language Tagalog began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century nearly all Ternateños get bilingual. In the case of Zamboangueño, the situation is somewhat different, since Visayan languages participated in the formation of the language (personal pronouns, derivational affixes, morphonology, discourse particles etc.). Therefore Zamboangueño shows currently a much more “Philippine character” than Ternateño does. Also here, Chabacano native speakers became the minority (under 50% of the current population).

Also this last fact – including others like mass media and education - lead to a further secondary contact: we refer to the situation that all varieties of Chabacano are exposed to English and Tagalog and in Zamboanga also to Cebuano. Monolingual speakers of Chabacano nowadays hardly exist. One result is massive borrowing and code switching (see example 1). And for this reason it is not surprising that we find quite a lot of “Philippine features” in all the varieties of Chabacano at many different levels, for example:

- phonetics and phonology (e.g. processes like palatalization and intonational patterns)
- morphonology (e.g. together with affixation)
- morphology (e.g. derivation in Zamboangueño; cf. Steinkrüger 2003)
- syntax (e.g. VSO basic word-order and P2-movement and the use of the potentative mode in Zamboangueño, cf. Rubino 2005)
- pragmatics (e.g. application of discourse particles like *ba* or *daw*)

### 6. Some conclusions concerning the different contact situations of Chabacano

But again, if we look at the structural similarities of Chabacano with other Portuguese-based creoles in Asia, we should ask, how old or how recent the features of Philippine origin are exactly. To resume: The case of Chabacano is still an interesting challenge for contact-linguistics and its structure can only be explained by a multidimensional approach. And finally, these important results of 500 years of contact with European languages should be taken more into consideration also in Austronesian studies (e.g. in the handbook by Adelaar and Himmelmann 2005) not only in creole studies.

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