

Developing the Chavacano Reader Project from the Chavacano Corpus

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Panel on the Teaching of Austronesian Languages

The five million Chavacano words acquired by the Chavacano Language Corpus Project (CLCP) led to the development of the first Chavacano Reader Project (CRP).

The Ateneo de Zamboanga University in collaboration with the Language Research Center (LRC) of McNeil Technologies created the Chavacano Reader Project after working together on the Chavacano Language Corpus Project.

The CRP is tasked to compile and produce a modern-day Chavacano Reader of approximately forty-six (46) selections. The Reader must also include the Front Matter (Preface, List of Abbreviations used, Grammatical Overview, Pronunciation Guide, Phonemic Notation, etc.) and an overall glossary. A selection is defined as having the Chavacano text, the English translation, the glossary, with the grammatical and cultural notes.

Below is an outline of the Project's various phases in developing a Chavacano Reader:

1. Selection of Reading Candidates

1. From 2,500 entries, the Readers-Selectors have to follow an algorithm set by the Chief Reader-Selector to choose 100 candidates
2. Adding descriptive titles or short summary of content
3. From 100 candidates to 60 best selections
Criteria: selecting topics, levels of difficulty, issues of length, spelling problems
Need for materials outside of corpus.
=Final selection is done by McNeil LRC (MLRC)

2. Draft Translation

1. Translators will produce draft English translations
2. 60 draft translations to be sent to MLRC in smaller batches
3. 46 translations to be selected by MLRC, with the cultural and grammatical notes

3. Text-Development Work

From 46 draft translations to final texts

1. Finalize the Chavacano text
2. Finalize glosses
3. Finalize notes
4. Polish English translations

4. Post-Text Development Work

1. Production of the Reader's Front Matter
2. Production of the Running Glossary (Overall glossary)

5. Lessons learned.

What would we do different next time?

What advice can we pass on to teachers & materials developers?

The Chavacano Corpus provided materials that are rich in culture; it provided the Reader with a wide range of possible candidates for selection and it also provided a variety of sources (e.g., newsprint, books, field interviews, radio and television recordings, etc.). Most of all, the Corpus was rich in Chavacano words or terms in both Spanish-based words (terms used in the olden days) and in so-called modern-day Chavacano words wherein Tagalog, English, Visayan and other languages are being used or absorbed and are basically accepted to be part of the Chavacano language.

However, the corpus had fallen short on the content of the different genres for the CRP's final selections. The genres include Culture and Society, Politics and Economics, Science and Technology, Defense and Security, and Geography and Environment. The final selections must have quality content, must not be time-bound and must not give the city, the country or any person a negative image.

There were less interviews to professionals (e.g., doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers, etc.), more interviews were conducted with the ordinary populace (e.g., housewives, students, sidewalk vendors, etc.) so the topics were limited only their way of life, experiences in the past and/or everyday living condition.

Some topics that dwelt on the political issue of the present government gave the country a negative image. While some more were about the different conflicts that has come about over the years such as economic conflict (over strategic resources and territories), religious war (Christians vs. Muslims), nationalist struggle (against the Spanish colonizer), and more recently as a clash of civilizations (West vs. Islam) or a war against terrorism.

In conclusion to these realizations, the CRP was not able to attain the exact number of approved selections from the CLCP although more than a hundred candidates were submitted. In order to compensate for the lack of approved selections; the CRP staff opted to

compose and research the new articles themselves and were able to meet the required number of selections to be included in the Reader.

Learning from these, the CRP would like to make some suggestions to future corpus projects... (What would we do different next time?)

- interview more professional individuals
- suggest topics that are relevant and are related to the different genres
- be free to compose your own literary piece

For developing future reader projects...

- have a preparation phase wherein you will work on the conceptualization of the entire work involve (acquiring the needed equipment and materials, setting up the physical working space, recruiting of qualified staff, general training, building teamwork, timeframe, etc.)
- undergo all the necessary Reader trainings and seminars (e.g., reading-selection seminar, translation seminar, and text-development seminar)
- seek advice from professionals, a consultant who has expertise in the language you are working with
- (What advice can we pass on to teachers & materials developers?) take time to further investigate the data on language sources to be used. Hopefully, for teachers and materials developers this will serve them as a source of information and reference for studying and developing linguistic-bound textbooks. This can also provide them with vital information as to how the Chavacano, especially Zamboanga Chavacano is being treated linguistically and lexicographically.

It is with optimism that this will eventually culminate in creating the first comprehensive Zamboanga Chavacano-English dictionary. Although there are several Chavacano-English dictionaries in existence, much of these dictionaries are insufficient in terms of numbers of entries and are mainly for those who would like to learn how to speak Chavacano and are not meant for scholars (linguist, creolist, language teacher) seeking an exact and complete understanding or meaning of the word.

The preceding document was presented at the Tenth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics (10-ICAL). To properly reference this work, please use the following format:

<LastName>, <FirstName>. 2006. <PaperTitle>. Paper presented at Tenth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics. 17-20 January 2006. Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines.
<http://www.sil.org/asia/philippines/ical/papers.html>

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