

Jorge E. Porras
Sonoma State University

Noun Phrase Marking in Chabacano (Philippine Creole Spanish): A Comparative Perspective

Spanish is claimed to be the common lexifier for three Creole languages: Palenquero (in Colombia), Papiamentu (in the Netherland Antilles), and Chabacano (in the Philippines). The first two creoles have African substrates and the last one is mostly Austronesian. This paper makes a morphological comparison, particularly in terms of their NP number and gender marking, from a Chabacano perspective. Data in the paper show that, despite their differences, a typological relationship is evident. They all have little or no inflectional morphology, while showing considerable influence of Philippine and Hispanic languages, respectively. Chabacano examples are largely taken from the Zamboangueño variety.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the current structural status of noun phrase marking in Philippine Creole Spanish (PCS), commonly known by its cover term, Chabacano (or Chavakano), as compared to the other two Spanish-based creoles, Palenquero and Papiamentu. Thus, it investigates their main differences and similarities, particularly in terms of noun phrase morphology. As is typical of creoles, PCS (particularly, Zamboangueño), Palenquero, and Papiamentu systems have virtually no inflectional morphology, in the sense that nouns, adjectives, verbs and determiners are almost always invariant. (For a recent typological and general comparative accounts of these creole languages, see, e.g., Clements 2012; Holm 2000; Lorenzino 2000).

In this regard, the paper attempts to identify basic typological relationships between PCS and the other two Spanish-based Creoles. To achieve these goals, first

a historical and sociolinguistic account of PCS is presented; secondly, an account of relevant morphological features of the noun phrase, as occur in the three main dialects of Chabacano (PCS), is also presented, illustrated with examples. Finally comes a chart with a set of said features in the three creole languages.

2. Historical and sociolinguistic remarks

PCS includes three main dialectal varieties: Caviteño and Ternateño residually spoken in Manila Bay (see, e.g., Llamado 1972; Molony 1977; Steinkrüger 2008, and Zamboangueño, actively spoken in Mindanao island.¹ It touches upon some of the diachronic (socio-historic) characteristics of the above-mentioned Chabacano varieties, but focuses on the synchronic (morphologic) features of Zamboangueño, in Zamboanga City, which has the largest population with about half million speakers. (See, among others, Fernández 2001; Forman 1972; Grant 2007); Lipski 2001, 1992, 2007).

The oldest PCS dialect is believed to be Ermiteño (or Ermitano), now extinct, but once actively used in the Ermita district of Manila, during the 19th century. This dialect exhibited basic Creole structures of Philippine languages such as Tagalog and Visayan (see, e.g., Barrios 2006; Steinbürger 2008). By that time, a Pidgin spoken by Chinese and other foreigners earned the label *español de cocina* 'kitchen Spanish', to refer to its imperfect grammar. However, as Lipski (2002:16) explains, "the term 'kitchen Spanish' was never applied to true PCS varieties such as Caviteño or Ternateño, except in error". In a similar vein, Galarza Ballester (2000:9) points out that, "(...) authentic *español de cocina* was used between native Filipinos and Chinese merchants, or between these groups and Spaniards, as a secondary

language. It was never used natively, [so] it could not thus be considered a Creole language, but a pidgin". See also Lipski 2001, for a sociolinguistic view. This issue will not be pursued farther here.

Lipski also explains that few attestations of legitimate Chabacano crop up in late 19th century literary texts, invariably from Cavite or Manila, although never identified explicitly as anything other than 'broken Spanish'. Nevertheless, these languages are not simply broken Spanish, but rather hybrid languages with consistent grammatical patterns, as shown by the following examples exhibiting legitimate Creole traits:²

- (1) a. *¿Ya cog-í -ba con Tadeo?*
Yet-ADV catch-INF IRR. 3PL with-OBJ. Tadeo?
 'Did they catch Tadeo yet?'
- b. *No jabl-á vos puelte, ñora, baká pa di quedá vos cómplice.*
NEG speak.2SG you-2SG loud.ADV lady, 'cause can say-INF stay you accomplice
 'Don't speak so loud, ma'am, or you'll be taken for an accomplice'.
- c. *Con-migo no ta debí nada*
With.mi.OBJ.1SG NEG be-NSPT owe nothing
 'He doesn't owe me anything'

In (1) a, the accusative/dative marker "con" (with), originally a Spanish preposition, is used, where 'ya' (already) is a lexicalized past tense marker and 'ba' is an aspectual particle; (1) b contains the future/irrealis particle "di"; finally, the preverbal aspectual particle "ta" is used in (1) c. These features, specially the last one, are salient in the grammar of Creole languages. (See spec. Holm 2000; Fernández 2007).

Ternateño and Caviteño dialects stem back from the 16-17th centuries, during the Spanish colonization. The Spanish troops, who had to withdraw from Indonesia,

settled in Manila to fight against the Chinese, and named the place Ternate. Spaniards also settled in the Cavite Peninsula, and the city of Cavite grew with immigrants from Ternate, and thus both languages were mixed. Ternateño and Caviteño are today known as Manila Bay Creole (see spec., Steinkrüger 2007). In turn, Cotabateño is regarded by most scholars as a variety of Zamboangueño. Both languages are identified as Southern Mindanao Creoles See, e.g., Lipski 2002; Llamado 1972; Wunnon 1956)

As for Zamboangueño, spoken in Zamboanga City, in Southern Mindanao Island, whose origins also go back to the 17th century, Lipski points out that Zamboangueño finally “came into existence as an independent language towards the middle of the 18th century” (Lipski 2002:38). Then, this author (2002:25ff) sets forth a theory to reconstruct the language. He postulates an abrupt creolization process that began sometime in the 19th century, and which underwent through several stages of evolution, Lipski (2002:38) indeed claims that Zamboangueño “came into existence as an independent language towards the middle of the 18th century” and, contrary to previous assumptions, this author shows that generational linguistic proficiency in Spanish has decreased to the point that only the oldest speakers of Zamboangueño can presently remember some Spanish picked up from their grandparents.

In other words, the farther back in time, the easier to distinguish between Zamboangueño and Spanish, and vice versa. Lipski also notes that in view of the significant structural similarities between Zamboangueño, on the one hand, and Cotavateño and Ternateño on the other, it is not feasible to claim totally

independent creolization in Zamboanga. However, additional evidence suggests that Zamboangueño did not simply grow from a nucleus of transplanted Manila Bay PCS, but evolved with a certain degree of independent substrate structural characteristics, considering a more direct influence of Cebuano and the Spanish variety in use in Southern Philippines.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is worth noting that all Chabacano dialects have had a low social profile, if not a total neglectfulness, among the non-Chabacano speaking population, throughout the history of the Philippines. Some people just ignore the magnitude of the Chabacano-speaking population; some others may have bad memories of former Spanish dominant times; and still others are simply ill-informed about the real linguistic and socio-cultural values of these dialects. This fact is probably due, among other reasons, to the lack of publications and publicity about the topic.³ According to the Ethnologue, Chabacano is spoken in Zamboanga, Basilan, Kabasalan, Siay, Margosatubig, Ipil, Malangas, Lapuyan, Buug, Tungawa, Alicia, Isabela, Lamitan, Maluso, Malamawi, Cotabato city, Mindanao; Cavite, Ternate, and Ermita near Manila. It is also spoken in Malaysia (Sabah). The 1970 census listed speakers in 60 of the 66 provinces (see also Lipski 1987; Quilis 1992).

3. Main morphological features of PCS nouns and determiners

Generally speaking, nouns and determiners are uninflected for gender and number in Creole languages. However, there exist considerable functional and interpretive variation. PCS nouns are typically masculine in that they are always preceded by the masculine definite singular article “el” (the) or the masculine indefinite singular

article “un” (a, an), although nouns may occasionally end in -a to mark feminine, especially when describing animate referents. The feminine singular article “la” may also occur in lexicalized sequences (see, e.g., Barrios 2006: 1-2). Examples are cited in (2):

- (2)a. *un maestr-o / un maestr-a*
 ART.INDF.M.SG teacher-M / a. teacher-F
 ‘A teacher’
- b. *el gat-o / el gat-a* (*la gata* is uncommon)
 ART.DEF.M.SG cat-M / the cat-F
 ‘The cat’
- c. *el virgen / la virgen* (accepted)
 the-M virgin-F / the-F virgin-F
- d. *el lun-a* (*la luna* is uncommon)
 the-M moon-F
 ‘the noon’

Spanish plural articles, *los* (the-masc.) and *las* (the-fem.), have practically disappeared in PCS dialects, even in writing, when naming plural forms of persons, places or things (whether masculine or feminine), and have been reduced mostly to formulaic or idiomatic expressions. They have been replaced by ‘maga’, which comes from the native Tagalog or Cebuano ‘mga’. This rule applies whether in common familiar or formal styles. See examples in (3):

- (3) a. *maga maestr-o-Ø / maga maestr-a*
 the-PL teacher-M.PL / The teacher-F.PL
 ‘The teachers’
- b. *maga buruj-o-Ø / maga buruj-a-Ø* ‘the witches’,
 the-PL witch.M.PL / the-PL witch.F.PL
maga niño / maga niña ‘the kids’, M/F
maga profesor / maga profesora ‘the professors’, M/F

Spanish plural suffixes of articles *-s*, *-as*, *-os*, have also almost disappeared in PCS dialects. *maga* or *mana* are used instead. However, plural *-es* is sometimes added to some nouns. See examples in (4):

(4) a. *maga* *mujer-es*
the-PL.M.F *woman.PL*
 ‘the women’

b. *maga naciones*
 ‘the nations’

c. *maga organizaciones*
 ‘the organizations’

It is common in all PCS dialects for some nouns to become doubled (or reduplicated) when pluralized, a characteristic of the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages. However, frequent variation may occur. Examples in (5):

(5) a. *maga cosa-cosa* *cosa-cosa*
the-pl *thing-thing* *thing-thing*
 ‘the things’ (maga cosa is uncommon)

b. *maga casa-casa* *casa-casa*
 ‘the houses’ (maga casa is common)

c. *maga gente-gente* *gente-gente*
 ‘the people’ (maga gente is common)

d. *maga bata-bata* *bata-bata*
 ‘the children’ (maga bata is common)

Also note:

e. *maga caballero* *caballero-caballero*
 ‘the gentlemen’ (*maga caballeros)

f. *mana dia* *dia-dia*
 ‘the days’ (*maga dias)

Like articles, also demonstratives, including descriptive adjectives, are invariably marked for masculine singular. See examples in (6):

- (6)a. *Ese* *princes-a*
 DEM.M princess-F
 'that princess'
- b. *Este* *cancion*
 DEM.PROX.M song-F
 'This song'
- c. *Ese* *nuevo* *lun-a*
 that-M ADJ.M moon.F
 'That new moon'

Possessive adjectives are formed by prefixing *di*, (probably from Spanish *de*), to the possessive pronouns, when *el* is in front of the phrase, as in (7):

- (7) *El di suyo profesion* 'his profession' (Holm
 2000)
 the-M of-*PREP* his-M.SG profession-F
 'His profession'

In Zamboangueño, *di* can be combined to yield forms, (masc /fem), such as *del* (from Spanish: *de-el* 'the-masc', as in (8):

- (8) *ya vira le oleh na casa del mujer,*
 ADV.PST return-*INF* he again LOC house-F of-the.POSS.M woman-F
 'He returned again to the woman's house' (Holm
 2000)

A characteristic feature of PCS is the formation of *Konel* (*Kon-el*) to signal accusative case. *Kon* (from Spanish, or Portuguese, *con / com*, 'with'), changes from its original commutative/instrumental meaning to the equivalent of *a, para* 'to', due to the likely influence of Tagalog and Cebuano. As Fernández (2007:476) argues, Philippine oblique markers *kan, kang, kay*, etc., could have motivated the change. See some examples in (9)a-c, taken from the above-mentioned author:

- (9) a. *Ya visit-a yo con Marta y María*

ADV-PST visit.INF I with-OBJ Marta and Maria
 'I visited Marta and Maria'

b. *Mga ladron, mga bata duru kabesa, ta puede kita disiplina tamen konel, na mga bata*
 'The thieves and stubborn children, we can also discipline them...
 the children'

c. *Yo ta busc-a tambien con Abdul*
I be-PROG look.INF also with-OBJ Abdul
 'I am also looking for Abdul'

Also, the determiner *si* is claimed to be an influence of Philippine languages (see note 4); it usually precedes proper names, as shown in (10):

(10) *No quier-e si Fe kon-el diamon hermanos*
Not want.3SG the Fe with-OBJ.ART POSS. 1PL brothers
 'Fe does not like our brothers'

Despite the variation shown above, Grant (2007:178) claims that in Zamboangueño (and, in general, Mindanao Chabacano), determiners match Spanish phonologically, "in terms of the categories expressed overtly, [its] system resembles that of the Philippine languages more than that of (...) Spanish"; however, further down, he explains that it is largely "because of the proliferation of determiners in use" (Cp. Op. Cit., p. 196)

As for bare nouns, two generalized types are considered here:

(i): mass vs. count nouns. If a mass noun, interpret it as non-plural with indefinite meaning, like in (11)a; if a count noun, interpret it as plural by default, or use *manga* for clarity, like in (11) b (See on this matter, Grant, op. cit., for data from Zamboangueño and other Mindanao varieties. Also, for this matter in Palenquero, see Schwegler 2007):

(11) a. *Ta- kom-é yo arros*

be.PROG.eat-INF *SBJ.1SG* *rice*
 'I am eating rice'

b. *Ta- but-a* *lang urinola- Ø*
be.[-PRF].throw-INF *ADV* *urinals.PL*
 'He just empties urinals'

(ii): in copular constructions. With a comment-topic order, like in (12)a, or a topic-comment order, like in (12)b, where, like in the Philippine languages, the former order is preferred (i.e., (12a)); however, despite the copular variation, both sentences mean the same, that is, 'Araceli is a school teacher'):

(12) a. *maestra si Araceli*

b. *si Araceli es maestra*

4. PCS and Afro-Hispanic Creoles

Lipski, (1992:11), following Fraser 1971, claims that, "Philippine Creole Spanish is not simply a Philippine language with unusually heavy Spanish lexical influence, nor is it Spanish with a large number of Philippine loanwords. It is a distinct language, easily distinguishable from both its Romance and Austronesian progenitors". Immediately afterwards, he adds, "Philippine Creole Spanish shares enough in common with the classic creoles of the Caribbean that no one would, I think, challenge its assignment to the category Creole language ". The question resulting from this claim is, how close this relationship turns out to be with respect to its Afro-Hispanic relatives, Palenquero and Papiamentu (For a comparison of these two creoles, see e.g. Maurer 1987).

It is worth to note that Palenquero and Papiamentu may not be exclusively considered Afro-Hispanic, but also Afro-Iberian, that is, the Portuguese component

is both socio-historically and structurally relevant to the superstrate formation of these creoles. However, linguists generally favor one position or the other, and more rarely both of them. For references on this regard, see specially Clements 2012; Holm 2006. See also Lipski 1986 for claims about the Portuguese element in PCS.

First, gender is simply non-existent as a grammatical category in the Spanish-based systems, with adjectives being descended from the masculine in Spanish. Compare (13) a-c, below, for examples in PCS, Palenquero, and Papiamentu, respectively

- (13) a. *El nuev-o luna* (PCS)
ART.M.SG ADJ.M moon
 ‘The new moon’
- b. *Ese nat-a é susio* (Palenquero)
DEM.M cream.F be.3SG ADj.M
 ‘This cream is dirty’
- c. *Un cas bunit-u* (Papiamentu)
Art.INDEF.M house beautiful.M
 ‘A beautiful house’

Secondly, the plural number in the three creoles is frequently expressed by particles such as ‘maga’, ‘ma’, and ‘-nan’, respectively. (In)-definiteness can also be expressed in each of these languages by corresponding articles, as shown in (14)a-c, below:

- (14)a. *el maga bata-Ø* (PCS)
ART.M.SG ART.PL boy.PL
 ‘the children’
- b. *un ma ría* (Palenquero)
ART.M.SG ART.PL day.SG
 ‘some days’

c. *e buki-nan ta aki'* (Papiamentu)
 ART.SG book.PL be.3SG LOC
 'the books are here'

In particular reference to Zamboangueno and other Mindanao Chabacano varieties, Grant (2007:196) states that PCS behaves somewhat differently from other Creoles (including Ibero-Romance lexifiers), due to the proliferation of determiners in use.⁵

Bare nouns in the three Creoles usually behave as follows: In PCS, as mentioned above, mass bare nouns are interpreted as non-plural with indefinite meaning, while count bare nouns are interpreted as plural by default (Cp. (11) a-b). A striking difference in relation to its Afro-Hispanic correlates is that PCS exhibits preference towards a comment-topic order in copular constructions (Cp. (12) a-b, above). Palenquero noun phrases (NPs), according to Schwegler (2007: 220; 2011:239-40), consist of just a bare noun, which generally renders all nouns in the language 'trans-numeral' in number. What it means is that nouns are neutral in Palenquero with respect to the inflectional dimension of number, in the sense that they can be interpreted either as plural or singular, when used in context.⁶ See the examples below (Schwegler 2007/2011):

- (15) a. *Ma moná tá má ngánde ku riesiséi*
 ART.PL youngster-PL be-3SG more big-ADJ PREP sixteen
 'Youngsters -in general- are bigger once they are sixteen'
- b. *í tába min-á un póko ma muhé aí l-óyo*
 I-SBJ be-IRR.1SG look-INF a little ART.PL woman.PL there the-hole
 'I was looking at the women down there by the creek'
- c. *Puetta ri kása*
 Door of house
 'The/a door or doors of the/a house or houses'

In (15) a and b, the (optional) pluralizer *ma* is overtly present, so marking the sentences plural; however, in c, no *ma* shows, so the meaning is neutral because the phrase is decontextualized.

Unlike PCS (here meant Zamboangueño) and Palenquero, Papiamento has neither prenominal plural markers, nor non-specific markers in bare and modified nouns. Papiamento and Palenquero, unlike PCS, have specific plural interpretation. In (16) are two Papiamento examples:⁷

(16). a. *Mi ta un studiante* ‘I am a student’

b. *Nan ta studiante* ‘They are students’

Also note that Palenquero uses an uninflected indefinite article *un*: ‘a(n)’, from its lexifier, in front of the plural marker *ma*, to mark non-specific contexts. (See the example below from Schwegler 1998: 261):

(17) *Un ma kusa aí* (Indef: ‘un’, Pl: ‘ma’)
‘Some things there’

Finally, in the chart below,⁸ PCS (specifically, Zamboangueño), Palenquero, and Papiamento are compared in terms of their noun phrase marking features. In a way, it represents a summary of the above account, although it proves more relevant to the Mindanao varieties than those of Manila Bay. The chart shows eleven NP categories roughly including nouns, adjectives, articles, and demonstratives, along with number and gender characteristics.

NOUN PHRASE MARKERS IN ZAMBOANGUENO (ZM), PALENQUERO (PL) AND PAPIAMENTO (PP):

	ZM	PL	PP
1. Bare nouns (generic?).....	+	+	+
2. Indefinite article.....	+	+	+
3. Definite art. (superstrate deictic?).....	0	0	+
4. Plural marker (=‘they’?).....	0	0	+
5. Personal nouns plus plural marker.....	+	0	+
6. Demonstratives.....	+	+	+
7. Demonstrative plus definite or plural.....	0	+	+
8. Rel. clauses + definite or plural marker.....	0	0	0
9. Prenominal adjective.....	+	+	+
10. Postnominal adjective.....	+	+	+
11. Gender agreement?.....	0	R	0

According to Holm’s statistical account for Spanish-based creoles shown above, all of them exhibit morphological marking in five of the eleven categories, with all lacking marking in category 8. Gender agreement was found marginally in Palenquero (indicated in the chart with an R for ‘rare’), and the only lacking a plural marker in category 5. Papiamento is the only showing a probable deictic marker for definite article, and a probable plural marker for subject pronoun. Likewise, Zamboangueno is the only lacking marker in category 7. All in all, in spite of their socio-historical and, in the case of PCS, ethnic differences, Spanish-based creoles prove to exhibit striking structural similarities.

5. Conclusions

This paper presented a descriptive and comparative analysis of noun marking structure in PCS or Chabacano, by means of an inter-dialectal and inter-linguistic comparison. In the inter-dialectal dimension the paper showed that PCS exhibits considerable variation, but high intelligibility, with basically two groups of dialects, one in the North and one in the South. It was also shown that, for socio-historical and structural reasons, PCS NPs morphology has been influenced by Spanish, as superstrate as well as Philippine/Austronesian languages such as Tagalog, Visayan, and Cebuano, among others, as substrate.

In regard with the inter-linguistic dimension, this paper compared PCS against Palenquero and Papiamentu, and found that, although there are significant differences in the way determiners and nouns are structured, there are also striking similarities that fully qualify the three systems as members of the Spanish-based Creole language category. Nevertheless, it seems clear that more reliable conclusions have to wait until an exhaustive analysis of updated data of the three Spanish-based creole languages is available, not only in the specific case of noun phrases, but also in the big picture. Thus, such analysis should include written and oral discourse in terms of intra- and inter-linguistic considerations.

Endnotes

1. Broadly, Chabacano includes three dialects in Manila Bay: Caviteño, Ternateño, and Ermitaño (the latter now extinct), all correlated through a Spanish superstrate and an Austronesian (mostly Tagalog) substrate, and three dialects in Mindanao

Island: Zamboangueño, Cotavateño, and Davaeño, all correlated through a Spanish superstrate and, generally, a Cebuano, Visayan, and Tagalog substrate. (See, e.g., Lipski 1986, 1987, 2002, 2007; Fernández 2001; Grant 2007; Holm 2000; Steinkrüger 2008; Clements 2012)

² Data taken or adapted from Lipski 2002 and Barrios 2006, among others. For the sake of this paper, the term ‘marker/marking’ comprises determiners such as articles, possessives, and demonstratives, as well as attached particles typically, but not exclusively, in the prenominal position.

³ However, at least as far as Caviteño is concerned, a language revitalizing campaign in favor of Chabacano is currently advancing in Cavite City (see, for example, Llamado 1972; more recently, see the following link about an article just published in a Manila Bulletin’s website: <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/333495/ternate-moves-preserve-chabacano>. (Accessed: 1/15/13)

⁴ This determiner comes probably from Tagalog or Cebuano. See, e.g., Clements 2012; Fernández 2007; Steinkrüger 2007; Barrios 2006

⁵ Grant 2007 examines two Creole varieties in Mindanao, Zamboangueño and Cotavateño (the latter in danger of extinction), and finds no structural differences between the two. He also notes that their vocabulary comes from Mexican Spanish.

⁶ See also Moñino & Schwegler 2002, where the authors agree in Palenquero nouns and ‘ma’ being ‘trans-numeral’ but differing in the origin of ‘ma’. (For a more general reference on Palenquero, see, e.g., Megenney 1986; Patiño 1983; Porras 1992;

⁷ For further reference on Papiamentu (or Papiamentu), see, among others, Munteanu 1996; Maurer 1998; Kester & Schmitt 2007; Jacobs 2008

8. This chart is adapted from Holm (2007: 56). It shows ONLY the marking features in the noun phrase, as occur in the three Spanish-based creoles: determiners (articles and demonstratives), nouns and adjectives.

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Hong Kong University.

Corresponding Address:

Jorge E. Porras, PhD
Professor of Spanish Language and Linguistics
Department of Modern Languages
Sonoma State University
1801 East Cotati Avenue
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

(707) 664-2351

jorge.porras@sonoma.edu