

## **The Acquisition of Case Marking by L1 Chabacano and L1 Cebuano Learners of L2 Filipino: Influence of Actancy Structure on Transfer\***

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Recent development in Philippine linguistics distinguishes Chabacano as having the accusative actancy structure different from most ergative Philippine languages, such as Filipino. The implications from this difference directly concern the acquisition of case marking in Filipino by L1 Chabacano learners, particularly on the subject and object arguments in intransitive and transitive sentences. Fifty Chabacano and fifty Cebuano children (7 to 8 years old) were asked to describe transitive and intransitive actions in Filipino, and to judge the grammaticality of sentences with either correct or incorrect case markings of transitive and intransitive forms. The results showed positive transfer for the intransitive subject in both groups, and negative transfer for the transitive subject and transitive object among the Chabacano children who tended to overgeneralize case marking patterns in Chabacano when speaking in Filipino. Implications for Filipino L2 instruction for different L1 speakers in the Philippines are discussed.

Key words: Chabacano, actancy, transfer, second language acquisition

### **1. Introduction**

Filipino children learn to speak one of several regional languages (e.g. Bikol, Cebuano, Chabacano, Ilocano, etc.) while growing up. When they enter school, they are required to learn Filipino and English, following the country's bilingual education policy. Learning Filipino is not too difficult for most children, as almost all Philippine

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languages are closely related within the Austronesian family of languages. Most of the Philippine languages exhibit the ergative actancy structure (Reid & Liao 2004). An exception is the Chabacano language, which is a Spanish-based Creole spoken in different parts of the Philippines, particularly in and around the Zamboanga peninsula in Mindanao. Chabacano is characterized by the accusative actancy structure (Nolasco 2005). The structural difference between Chabacano and Filipino may also pose problems for the Chabacano-speaking child who is learning Filipino as a second language. In particular, Chabacano-speaking children may exhibit difficulty acquiring case marking rules in Filipino because the pertinent syntactic pattern of their first language and of Filipino is dissimilar. In contrast, Cebuano-speaking children should not have any such difficulty because their first language and Filipino share a common syntactic pattern. In this study, these hypotheses are examined in samples of Zamboangueño Chabacano- and Cebuano-speaking children who are also learning Filipino.

### **1.1 Transfer in second language learning**

Research in second language learning has identified a wide range of external and internal factors influencing second language acquisition. The transfer of linguistic knowledge from first language (L1) to second language (L2) has been the subject of investigation in recent studies. The following studies demonstrate transfer of linguistic properties in language areas where linguistic patterns between an L1 and an L2 differed.

Helms-Park (2001) investigates the transfer of verb properties between L1 Hindi-Urdu and L1 Vietnamese learning L2 English through the use of a syntactic data involving causatives elicited from L2 English learners. Hindi-Urdu was compared with Vietnamese on the basis of causativization patterns which differed significantly between these two languages. While Hindi-Urdu, like English, has stem-sharing causativization, generally with accompanying morphological changes, Vietnamese has little stem-sharing causativization, using suppletion, periphrasis or verb serialization. A sample of forty-seven L1 Hindi-Urdu and forty-five L1 Vietnamese, who were enrolled in ESL community programs in Toronto, participated in the study. They were classified according to elementary, intermediate, or advanced English levels, and were tested in a picture-based production test, a picture-based multiple-choice test, and a grammaticality judgment test. Results show that there is some transfer of verb properties from the L1 verb lexicon to the L2 verb lexicon, as validated in the accidental causation, internal mechanism, and forced motion conditions, but not in the directional motion semantic classes. A specific case of negative transfer is found in overgeneralized lexical rules, such as the use of a translation equivalent of the Vietnamese periphrastic *lam* 'make' in the English constructions.

In a related study, Helms-Park (2003) notes the manifestation of verb serialization in the interlanguage of Vietnamese-speaking ESL learners, and attributes this to transfer, which accordingly, may be compared to substrate influence in creoles with serial verb constructions (SVCs). Vietnamese-speaking participants produced a number of serial-type constructions that reflected lexico-semantic aspects of causative SVCs in their L1. Some examples are *\*Suzie is cooking butter melted* and *\*the man dropped the can of paint fell*. This verb serialization is manifested in a picture-based production task that elicited English causatives through the use of pictures representing a causation of events. Hindi-Urdu, unlike Vietnamese, is a non-serializing language like English. Employed for comparative purposes, Urdu-speaking learners of L2 English did not produce any equivalents of SVCs. Helms-Park considers this transfer to be the result of a communication strategy.

Similarly, Jarvis & Odlin (2000) report the results of an investigation of morphological transfer in the spatial reference in the written compositions of 140 Finnish-speaking and 70 Swedish-speaking adolescent learners of English, offering support to the transferability of bound morphology. Finnish and Swedish are characteristically different in many ways. Finnish, a Finno-Ugric language, has 15 productive nominal cases, which are manifested in agglutinative suffixes on nouns and their modifying adjectives. Swedish, which (like English) is a Germanic language, has only nominative and genitive cases for nominals, and pronominals have the nominative, accusative, and genitive cases. Swedish has a simple verb system and there is an absence of subject-verb agreement; verb system is complex in Finnish, involving morphological changes to mark person, pluralization, and agreement. In addition, prepositions used to represent spatial distinctions in English and Swedish are similar. Results show that both the bound, agglutinative morphology of the L1 Finnish spatial system and the free, prepositional morphology of the L1 Swedish spatial system influence the options that participants take in their spatial reference in L2 English. In addition, the structural and semantic differences between Finnish and Swedish result in different patterns of spatial reference in English. A clear indication of L1 influence is the tendency of Finns to omit prepositions in all the spatial contexts examined. Moreover, the Finns were found to overgeneralize the use of *in* as a cover term for internal locative (*in*) and directional (*into*), resulting in nonstandard use of the preposition.

Finally, McDonald (2000) investigates the influence of age of acquisition and native language in second language acquisition by comparing the L2 English mastery of early and late learners from the L1 backgrounds of Spanish and Vietnamese, putting under scrutiny the factors of age of acquisition and the similarity of L1 and L2 grammars on performance on an L2 grammaticality judgment task covering twelve rule types. The Spanish L1–English L2 group was predicted to have fewer problems in L2

mastery because these two were inflectional languages and shared many similarities. The results of the first experiment revealed that early acquirers showed little difficulty with English grammar, but that late acquirers showed some difficulty (except with word order) even if the structures that were tested had direct parallels with their L1. The second experiment involving Vietnamese-speaking learners of English predicted that they would show difficulty since Vietnamese differed from English in several ways. Vietnamese is a tonal language consisting of monosyllabic native words; there is no inflectional marking by affixes and definite or indefinite articles, and yes-no questions do not involve a change of word order, *inter alia*. The experiment confirmed this prediction. The study concludes that critical period is not the only factor accounting for the difficulty. As the study shows, not everyone who was exposed during the critical period showed native mastery, and that some exposed beyond the critical period demonstrated native-like competence. The other strong factor, the study suggests, is the similarity (or dissimilarity) of the grammatical structure of the L1 and the L2, which affects the mastery level of learners in the L2.

## **1.2 The current study**

The present study investigated the proposition that the acquisition of case marking rules in two groups of L2 Filipino learners would be affected by the similarity or difference in the actancy structure of L1, which is either Cebuano or Chabacano, and Filipino. Reid & Liao (2004) provide a comprehensive description of transitivity and ergativity of Philippine languages, and this description indicates that most Philippine languages, Filipino and Cebuano included, are morphologically ergative languages. However, Chabacano seems to be one of the exceptions in that it seems to be a morphologically accusative language (Forman 2001, Nolasco 2005).

Chabacano has no genetic relation to the different Philippine languages which are grouped within the category of Austronesian languages. Chabacano is a Creole that developed in a contact situation, and derives the majority of its lexicon from its Iberian-based superstrate, particularly from Spanish and Portuguese, while some of its grammatical properties are developed from the substrates. Rubino (2008) claims that Zamboangueño Chabacano, particularly, shows a strong influence of Cebuano and Hiligaynon, two among other languages which Zamboangueño Chabacano is in contact with. A clear case of departure from its Austronesian-dominant environment, Chabacano exhibits an accusative actancy structure that is different from the ergative structure characteristic of most Philippine languages such as Filipino and Cebuano. The sentences in Table 1 illustrate these differences.

**Table 1:** Comparison of case marking in Filipino, Cebuano, and Chabacano<sup>1</sup>

Intransitive subject: (‘The woman fell.’)			Transitive subject and object: (‘The man chased the cat.’)		
Filipino	(1) Nahulog	<u>ang=babae.</u> Perf-fall ABS/NOM=woman S	(2) Hinabol	<u>ng=tao</u> Perf-chase-OF ERG/GEN=tao A	<u>ang=pusa.</u> ABS/NOM=cat P
Cebuano	(3) Nahug	<u>ang=babaye.</u> Perf-fall ABS/NOM=woman S	(4) Gigukod	<u>sa=tawo</u> Perf-chase-OF ERG/GEN=man A	<u>ang=pusa.</u> ABS/NOM=cat P
Chabacano	(5) Ya-kay	<u>el muhér.</u> Asp-fall NOM=woman S	(6) Ya-asé apas	<u>el hénte</u> Asp-make chase NOM=man A	<u>konel gáto.</u> ACC=cat P

In (1) the subject of the intransitive verb *nahulog* ‘fell’ is *ang babae* ‘the woman’. In (2) the subject of the transitive verb *hinabol* ‘chased’ is *ng tao* ‘the man’, while the direct object is *ang pusa* ‘the cat’. Similarly, the subject of the intransitive verb *nahug* ‘fell’ in (3) is the NP *ang babaye* ‘the woman’, and the subject of the transitive verb *gigukod* ‘chased’ in (4) is *sa tawo* ‘the man’, while its transitive object is *ang pusa* ‘the cat’. In ergative languages such as Filipino and Cebuano, the intransitive subject and the transitive object NPs are marked by the absolutive (also nominative) case, different from the transitive subject which is assigned the ergative (also genitive) case.

In (5), the subject *el muhér* ‘the woman’ for the intransitive verb *ya kay* ‘fell’ is marked in the same way as the subject *el hénte* ‘the man’ for the transitive verb in (6) *ya asé apas* ‘chased’. Both subjects receive the same nominative case marking. The direct object *konel gáto* ‘the cat’ for the transitive verb in (6) *ya asé apas* ‘chased’ is marked differently by the direct object marker *konel*, which receives the accusative case marking. It should be noted, though, that there is no morphological nominative marking for NPs in Chabacano. The NP *el muhér* ‘the woman’ can also occur as an object depending on the context.

How arguments in the intransitive and transitive sentences are marked and distinguished in this study follow Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000). Core arguments relate to two universal clause types—an intransitive clause, with an intransitive predicate and a

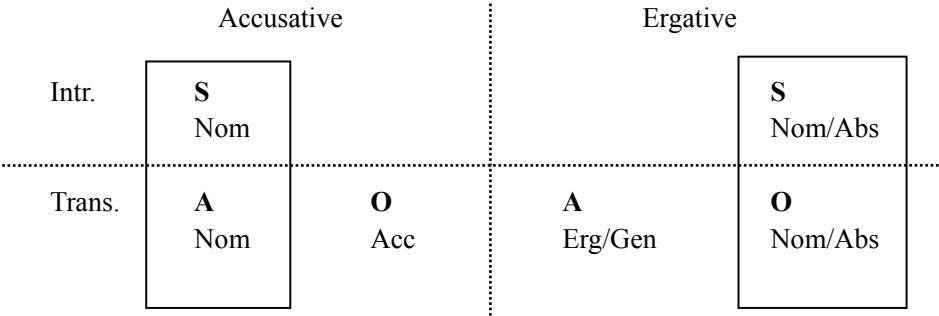
<sup>1</sup> List of Abbreviations:

Perf	Perfective	S	Subject of an intransitive verb
ABS	Absolutive	A	Subject of a transitive verb
NOM	Nominative	P	Object of a transitive verb
OF	Object focus	Asp	Aspect
ERG	Ergative	ACC	Accusative
GEN	Genitive	NP	Noun phrase

single core argument which is in S (intransitive subject) function, and a transitive clause, with a transitive predicate and two core arguments which are A (transitive subject) and O (transitive object). In a similar discussion, Liao (2004) explains that in a canonical or plain intransitive verb construction, the sole argument is marked S; the more active core argument of a canonical or plain transitive verb is marked A, while its less active core argument is marked O (sometimes P). Liao distinguishes these arguments in relation to accusative and ergative systems:

A system is accusative if S and A have the same grammatical relation coding (i.e., nominal case-marking, cross-referencing on the verb, and/or contrastive word order), while O has distinct grammatical relation coding. A system is ergative if S and O have the same grammatical relation coding, while A has distinct grammatical relation coding... In an accusative system, S and A are marked by the nominative case, whereas O is marked by the accusative case. In an ergative system, S and O are marked by the nominative case, whereas A is marked by the ergative case. (p.55)

The relationship between ergative and accusative systems and their corresponding arguments is represented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Accusative versus ergative systems (Liao 2004:55)

Following Nolasco’s (2005) examples, sentences (1), (3), and (5) are examples of an intransitive construction with only one or sole argument (S), while (2), (4), and (6) are examples of a transitive construction with two distinct arguments — an A acting as the source or agent, and a P as the most affected entity or patient.

As demonstrated by the foregoing examples, the subject of an intransitive verb (S) and the subject of a transitive verb (A) in the accusative actancy structure receive the same case marking—i.e. nominative. The object of a transitive verb (P), meanwhile, receives a different case marking, accusative. On the other hand, the ergative actancy

structure marks the subject of an intransitive verb (S) and the object of a transitive verb (P) in the nominative or absolutive case, while the subject of a transitive verb (A) is marked differently, that with the ergative or genitive case. The treatment of the direct object of transitive verbs distinctly from the subject of both transitive and intransitive verbs makes Chabacano an accusative language. Nolasco asserts that this feature is inherited from Spanish and Portuguese, both of which are accusative languages.

In a related discussion, Nolasco (2006) puts forward Philippine transitivity parameters, claiming that not all semantically transitive verbs may qualify as true transitives (similar claims have been made in Liao 2002, 2004, Gibson & Starosta 1990, and Starosta 1997, 1998, 1999). The following sentences exemplify this point:

- (7) *Nagbasa siya ng libro.* 'He read a book.'
- (8) *Binasa niya ang libro.* 'He read the book.'

Nolasco argues that (7) is considered semantically transitive with a semantic agent and a semantic patient but is grammatically intransitive. It is not clear, for example, whether the action in (7) is completed. Sentence (8) appears to be a true transitive because the action is volitional, effortful, and punctual, and the patient is clearly definite.

In addition, a two-argument sentence containing a verb with the *um* affix such as *sumusulat siya ng liham* 'he is writing a letter' is classified as dyadic intransitive (with an indefinite patient), while a two-argument sentence containing a verb with the *in* affix such as *sinulat niya ang liham* 'he wrote the letter' is canonical transitive. This suggests that a true transitive sentence is that when the verb is in object-focus (e.g. *binasa niya ang libro* 'he read the book', *sinulat niya ang liham* 'he wrote the letter', while a seemingly transitive verb in the transitive continuum is in actor-focus (e.g. *nagbasa siya ng libro* 'he read a book', *sumusulat siya ng liham* 'he is writing a letter'. Transitivity in this study follows this definition.

The difference in the distribution of the case marking of subjects and objects in Chabacano and Filipino suggests that children whose L1 is Chabacano may have some difficulties learning the case markings of Filipino. On the other hand, children whose L1 is Cebuano should not have such difficulties. This study hypothesizes that the L1 knowledge acts as the primary source of constraint because the actancy structure is markedly different from that of the target language. The accusative system differs specifically in the case marking of subjects and objects in the transitive construction. While Filipino requires genitive case marking for a transitive subject and nominative marking for a transitive object, Chabacano uses the nominative case for a transitive subject and accusative case for the transitive object. As a consequence, negative transfer may occur; in particular, L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino may use the nominative case in

place of the appropriate genitive case marker for a transitive subject, and the accusative instead of the nominative case for a transitive object. At the same time, positive transfer may also occur, particularly in the use of the nominative case marker to subjects in the intransitive construction which receives the nominative case marking in both L1 Chabacano and L2 Filipino. In contrast, Cebuano speakers of L2 Filipino would most likely show positive transfer for both subjects and objects in both transitive and intransitive constructions.

To summarize, the present study seeks answers to this general question: Will L1 Chabacano and L1 Cebuano speakers transfer their case marking of subjects and objects in intransitive and transitive conditions when learning L2 Filipino? The following specific hypotheses are posed:

Hypothesis 1.0 Intransitive Subject: Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino will transfer their L1 nominative case marking system to L2 nominative, resulting in positive transfer for subjects in the intransitive condition. Likewise, Cebuano learners of L2 Filipino will transfer their L1 nominative case marking system to L2 nominative, resulting in positive transfer for subjects in the intransitive condition.

Hypothesis 2.0 Transitive Subject: Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino will transfer their L1 nominative case marking system to L2 genitive, resulting in negative transfer for subjects in the transitive condition. On the other hand, Cebuano learners of L2 Filipino will transfer their L1 genitive case marking system to L2 genitive, resulting in positive transfer for subjects in the transitive condition.

Hypothesis 3.0 Transitive Object: Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino will transfer their L1 accusative case marking system to L2 nominative, resulting in negative transfer for objects in the transitive condition. On the other hand, Cebuano learners of L2 Filipino will transfer their L1 nominative case marking system to L2 nominative, resulting in positive transfer for objects in the transitive condition.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Participants**

As this study investigates the influence of actancy structure on case marking acquisition, it involved participants whose formal exposure to the L2 is minimal, hence children in the early grades. Fifty 7-to-8-year-old Chabacano-speaking learners of L2 Filipino from Zamboanga City (main group) and fifty 7-8-year-old Cebuano-speaking learners of L2 Filipino from Cebu City (comparison group) participated in the study.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The data presented in this paper were collected in 2006 through the *Language Learning* Dissertation Grant awarded to the first author by the *Journal of Language Learning*.



By having two contrasting L1 groups on the basis of the difference in actancy structure, it was possible to identify transfer effects when performance in the tasks yielded different results between the two groups, corresponding to their differences in actancy structure.

The participants were selected from different public and private elementary schools in Zamboanga City in southern Philippines and Cebu City in central Philippines on the basis of their parents' self-reports. All the participants were in their second grade of formal schooling and were in their second year of formal Filipino instruction.

Pilot tests conducted in an elementary school in Zamboanga City involved a total of 11 children, seven of whom were in Grade 1 and four in Grade 2. The tests revealed that while children in the first grade were generally able to understand instructions and identify pictures in Filipino, they were unable to describe them in complete sentences. For this reason, the grade two level requirement for the participants was chosen.

Comparability between groups is further attested by a lack of significant difference between groups (Chabacano  $M = 12.740$ ,  $SD = 1.468$ ; Cebuano  $M = 2.920$ ,  $SD = 1.259$ ;  $F(1, 98) = .433$ ,  $p = .512$ ) in a task that required participants to name objects in pictures in their respective first languages.

All instructions were provided in Filipino, and students were asked to respond in Filipino. At the end of the tests, each child was given a box of crayons for participating in the study.

## **2.2 Instruments and tasks**

Data for this study were gathered from the participants using four tasks/instruments: parents' self-report questionnaire, picture-naming task, picture description task, and grammaticality judgment task. Although based on instruments used in related literature, the three main tasks were originally designed by the researchers. A professional artist provided the illustrations used in the main tasks.

### **2.2.1 Parent's self-report**

The parent's self-report (PSR) was used to gather personal information about the target participants and to select them on the basis of their parents' answers. Information about parents and children's use of languages at home, and the extent of the use of these languages were also elicited. The dominant language used at home (i.e. Chabacano for the Chabacano group and Cebuano for the Cebuano group) as reported by the parents was the primary basis for the selection of the participants.

### 2.2.2 Picture-naming task

The picture-naming task (PNT) was used to ascertain children's knowledge of the meanings of the lexical items represented by simple outline drawings in the main tasks. The lexical items (as well as the verbs) were selected from an inventory of nouns and verbs gathered from three Filipino-authored children's workbooks in Filipino used in Grade 1. Included in this set are the following: *bote* 'bottle', *papel* 'paper', *pisara* 'blackboard', *bata* 'small boy or girl', *aso* 'dog', *kotse* 'car', *bola* 'ball', *babae* 'woman', *saging* 'banana', *plato* 'plate', *libro* 'book', *puno* 'tree', *lalaki* 'man', *mesa* 'table', and doorbell. Altogether, 15 outline drawings were presented for each participant to identify. A fixed order of presentation of the pictures was followed for all participants.

The task was presented in the context of a conversation between the child and two cartoon character puppets (i.e. Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse). The Mickey Mouse puppet would ask the child to name the object depicted in a picture. It was necessary to provide context for the task because the participants were young children who needed some form of visual and auditory motivation to help them carry on with the tasks. Context was also important in order to make the children feel as though they were playing a game, or having a conversation with the cartoon characters, rather than being tested in the traditional sense. The children's high degree of familiarity with the puppets added to the children's general interest.

### 2.2.3 Picture description task

The picture description task (PDT) was used to measure the participants' ability to produce correctly case-marked intransitive subjects, transitive subjects, and transitive objects in sentences in Filipino. The children were given a set of pictures that require the use of the aforementioned case-marked forms in Filipino, and they were asked to describe these pictures in Filipino.

Pictures in the intransitive condition depict monadic intransitives with human subjects. The pictures were presented in a comic strip, each set containing two successive frames. The first frame showed the human subject in stationary position, while the second frame showed him performing the intransitive action. Pictures in the transitive condition depicted dyadic transitives involving a human agent and a non-human or inanimate patient. Like the intransitive condition, the pictures were presented in a comic strip, each set containing two successive frames. In order to show the action clearly, the first frame showed both the agent and the patient in stationary position, while the second frame showed the agent performing the transitive action on the patient. In order for the

child to easily distinguish them, the agent was always depicted on the left side of the picture, while the patient is on the right. The filler pictures depicted simple lexical items that do not perform any action, and showed a lone subject in stationary position. These fillers were utilized to break up the pattern of responses and to provide a variety of sentence structures. The fillers depicted sentences which were either adjectival predications or existential.

To introduce the task, Mickey Mouse would tell the child that Minnie Mouse did not understand Filipino too well, and that she would need the child's help to learn the language. The child is asked to describe the pictures to Minnie Mouse. Before the actual task trials, a practice phase was conducted where the child was asked to describe the two practice pictures in the intransitive and the transitive conditions, after which he/she proceeded to describe a set of 25 outline drawings depicting 10 intransitive and 10 transitive verb targets, as well as 5 filler verbs.

The pictures were presented in one fixed non-random order, where each set of five pictures had two pairs of intransitive and transitive sentences presented alternately, and capped with a filler sentence. Each set of five sentences was followed by a brief break, offering positive remarks and instructions to the child in order to give the child some opportunity for rest, to allow for conversation and processing to take place, and to sustain the child's motivation and interest in the tasks. The PDT was administered before the grammaticality judgment task to ensure that responses here would not be influenced by the constructions contained in the remaining task.

#### **2.2.4 Grammaticality judgment task**

The grammaticality judgment task (GJT) aims to measure participants' ability to think abstractly about a language and to reflect on the grammaticality or ungrammaticality of linguistic features in that language. Here, each participant was required to judge whether a Filipino sentence describing a picture were grammatically correct.

There were 25 items in the GJT: 15 items whose case markings for the subject or the object in both the intransitive and the transitive conditions were deliberately distorted, 5 items with correct case markings, and 5 filler items. For the incorrect set of sentences, five sentences depicted the use of intransitives in which the sentences incorrectly used subjects, another five sentences depicted transitive verbs with incorrect subjects, and the last five depicted transitive verbs with the incorrect use of the object.

For this task, the Minnie Mouse puppet "attempted" to describe pictures to the child, and the child would be asked to say whether or not she described it correctly. A research assistant would hold up the Minnie Mouse puppet and mimic her movement according to the voice played on the tape. Here, it was important to allow the child to easily

distinguish the characters speaking, hence the choice of a male voice and a female voice to correspond to the two cartoon characters was used. Also, each sentence had to be read very carefully and in a manner most appealing to a child. The Minnie Mouse character used the motherese register, with a higher pitch and a slower pace than those of Mickey Mouse's speaking parts. Each syllable was stressed and vowels were extended, particularly the subject and objects markers. After a sentence was "read" by Minnie Mouse, the researcher would stop the tape and wait for the child to respond. As soon as the child gave an answer, the researcher resumed playback. The same procedure was followed in the task proper until the child reached the end of the task.

Like the PDT, a practice phase involving two practice sentences preceded the main task. One of the practice sentences was correct and the other was incorrect. After these practice sentences, the child proceeded to the 25 main trials. To ensure that children's answers in the PDT would not influence their judgment in the GJT, this task used a different set of 10 intransitives, 10 transitives, and 5 filler pictures, depicting verbs not used previously in the PDT. However, the same lexical items were used in order to build on the children's familiarity with the subjects and objects and to prevent them from taking too much time in processing this task. The items were presented in a non-random order, and like the PDT, every set of five sentences was followed by a break in order to reinforce the instructions, to give positive feedback, and to allow for conversation among the child and the characters speaking.

### **2.3 Data collection procedure**

The three tasks were all administered in Filipino, and the children were asked to answer in Filipino. All instructions and verbal stimuli in the three tasks had been recorded with the help of a native speaker of Filipino, and the audio recorded instructions and stimuli were played during the experiments.

The children were tested individually in a face-to-face set-up, conducted and recorded within school premises. The lead researcher and her assistant sat at each side of the child, with the assistant manipulating both puppets. The child sat in the middle facing the stuffed toys and a presentation folio containing the picture stimuli. The cassette player and the cassette recorder were within easy reach of the researcher who operated the equipment, as well as flipped through the pictures. A microphone was attached to the child's shirt and connected to the cassette recorder.

### **2.4 Data analysis**

Each of the child's responses in the three tasks (i.e. the PNT, PDT, and GJT) was transcribed and scored for correctness. For the PDT, the child could get a total perfect

score of 20, 10 for correct subject in the intransitive condition and 10 for correct subject and object in the transitive condition. For the GJT, the child could also get a perfect score of 20, 5 for the correct identification of subject intransitive correct, 5 for subject intransitive incorrect, 5 for subject transitive incorrect, and 5 for object transitive incorrect. To test the various hypotheses, separate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures were conducted to compare the scores of the two groups of children. In addition to marking the correct responses, the child's incorrect responses in the PDT were analyzed qualitatively to allow for further tests of the research hypotheses.

### 3. Results

Did the different actancy structures of the L1 Chabacano and L1 Cebuano influence the acquisition of case markings in L2 Filipino? The data generally supported this hypothesis as will be shown in the following subsections.

#### 3.1 Performance analysis

Consider the first specific hypothesis regarding the intransitive subject: both Chabacano and Cebuano learners of L2 Filipino will transfer their L1 accusative case marking system to L2 ergative, resulting in positive transfer for subjects in the intransitive condition. In the Picture Description Task (PDT), both Chabacano- and Cebuano-speaking children performed extremely well with the intransitive subject, with mean scores of 9.46 ( $SD = .813$ ) and 9.48 ( $SD = .762$ ), respectively, out of a perfect score of 10. The ANOVA indicated that there was no significant difference between the performance of the two groups of children with these items,  $F(1, 98) < 1.0$ .

These results in the PDT were further validated by the results in the Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT). Once again, both Chabacano- and Cebuano-speaking children performed extremely well with the intransitive subject, with near perfect mean scores of 4.86 ( $SD = .351$ ) and 4.82 ( $SD = .482$ ), respectively, almost always judging the five grammatical sentences as being correct. The ANOVA also showed no significant difference between the performance of the two groups of children,  $F(1, 98) < 1.0$ . With the incorrectly marked intransitive subjects, both groups of children were not very good at reporting these as being grammatical. Mean correct grammatical judgments were 1.22 ( $SD = 1.375$ ) and 1.80 ( $SD = 1.726$ ) for Chabacano- and Cebuano-speaking children, respectively,  $F(1, 98) = 3.46$ , n.s.

The consistent results regarding the intransitive subject so far support the hypothesized effect of the actancy structure, in particular, the transfer of the consistent case marking from both L1 Chabacano and Cebuano to L2 Filipino. However, a better

test of the general hypothesis involves the divergent predictions regarding the acquisition of the ergative case marking of the transitive subject and object in Filipino, as indicated in the second and third specific hypotheses. The combined second and third hypothesis was: Chabacano learners of Filipino will transfer their L1 accusative case marking system to L2 ergative, resulting in negative transfer for subjects in the transitive condition and negative transfer for objects in the transitive condition, but Cebuano learners will transfer their L1 ergative case marking system to L2 ergative, resulting in positive transfer for both subject and objects in the transitive condition.

The PDT data were consistent with these hypotheses. Both groups of children made more mistakes with the transitive sentences, but Cebuano speakers ( $M = 6.64$ ,  $SD = 2.310$ ) used the correct ergative case marking more often than the Chabacano speakers ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 2.725$ ), and this difference was statistically significant,  $F(1, 98) = 20.12$ ,  $p < .0001$ . These PDT results were partially supported by the data from the GJT. Cebuano speakers ( $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 1.935$ ) made more correct judgments regarding the incorrect ergative case marking for the transitive subject more often than the Chabacano speakers ( $M = 1.64$ ,  $SD = 1.699$ ),  $F(1, 98) = 3.91$ ,  $p = .051$ . The Cebuano speakers ( $M = 1.14$ ,  $SD = 1.641$ ) seemed to make more correct judgments regarding the incorrect ergative case marking for the transitive object compared to the Chabacano speakers ( $M = 0.72$ ,  $SD = 1.089$ ), but this difference was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 98) = 2.27$ ,  $p > .10$ . Table 2 shows the summary of results in the picture description and grammaticality judgment tasks.

**Table 2:** One-way ANOVA results for Cebuano and Chabacano groups on the PDT and GJT

Dependent variables	P	Ceb	Cha	df	F	P
Total scores (PDT)	20	16.120	13.840	1,98	17.304	*.000
Subject intransitive correct	10	9.480	9.460	1,98	.016	.899
Subject intransitive incorrect	-	.200	.320	1,98	1.313	.255
Subject and object transitive correct	10	6.640	4.380	1,98	20.012	*.000
Subject and object transitive incorrect	-	.06	.360	1,98	6.421	*.013
Total scores (GJT)	20	10.120	8.440	1,98	3.735	** .056
Subject intransitive correct	5	4.820	4.860	1,98	.225	.636
Subject intransitive incorrect	5	1.800	1.220	1,98	3.455	.066
Subject transitive incorrect	5	2.360	1.640	1,98	3.907	*.051
Object transitive incorrect	5	1.140	.720	1,98	2.273	.135

P = points, Ceb = Cebuano mean, Cha = Chabacano mean, df = degrees of freedom, F = F-ratio,  $p$  = probability,

\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\* = marginally significant

### 3.2 Error analysis

To further test the hypotheses regarding the negative transfer of the accusative case markings from Chabacano to Filipino, the incorrect case marking combinations in the Chabacano PDT data were analyzed. The analysis of the incorrect case markings for both intransitive and transitive constructions reveal three patterns of case marking use that support negative transfer for the transitive subject from Chabacano to Filipino in sentences with an object-focus. These three patterns are: (a) nominative (agent)-nominative (patient) with transitive subject and transitive object; (b) nominative-genitive; and (c) nominative (patient)-nominative (agent) with transitive subject and transitive object.

The first pattern of errors involves the nominative (agent)-nominative (patient) form in an object-focus sentence in Filipino with a transitive subject and a transitive object. An example taken from the Chabacano component reads *\*binasag ang bata ang bote*, where both the transitive subject and the transitive object are case-marked nominative. Target Filipino case-marking requires the genitive case in the transitive subject in the object-focus sentence *binasag ng bata ang bote* ‘the boy broke the bottle’. The double nominative type is a clear violation of case marking rules in Filipino, and the best evidence for negative transfer from L1 Chabacano to L2 Filipino, where the nominative case of the L1 transitive subject is incorrectly transferred to the L2 transitive subject.

There were 20 instances of this type of case marking combination produced by 13 Chabacano-speaking participants, but only one instance of this type of combination was produced by the Cebuano-speaking group. The difference in frequency of such errors for the two groups was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 17.56, p < .0001$ , and the difference in the number of children who made such errors for the two groups was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 11.96, p = .0005$ .

The second type of case marking combination showing negative transfer from L1 Chabacano to L2 Filipino is nominative-genitive, which is an object-focus sentence in Filipino with a transitive subject and a transitive object. The former bears the nominative case, while the latter bears the genitive case (e.g. *\*pinunit sila ng papel*).

Like the previous example, the transfer of the nominative transitive subject in L1 Chabacano to L2 Filipino results in negative transfer for the transitive subject. Also, the transitive object is incorrectly case-marked in this type, bearing the genitive case, when the genitive is most appropriate in the actor-focus sentence. Hence, in this type, both the transitive subject and the transitive object carry the incorrect case markers.

Three instances from three participants in the Cebuano data were observed, while there were 13 instances of this type produced by 10 Chabacano participants. The difference in frequency of such errors for the two groups was statistically significant,

$\chi^2(1) = 6.35, p = .012$ , and the difference in the number of children who made such errors for the two groups was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.33, p = .037$ .

The third pattern of incorrect productions was a nominative (patient)-nominative (agent) combination in an object-focus sentence in Filipino with a transitive subject and a transitive object. However, the word order is reversed, that is, the arguments are incorrectly placed, with the object coming before the subject (e.g. *\*sinusunog ang notebook si Mark at si Jenny*).

No instance of this type is recorded from the Cebuano data, while 16 instances of this type in the Chabacano data were observed in the data. The difference in frequency of such errors for the two groups was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 13.17, p = .0003$ .

These three patterns of errors in case marking use in Filipino produced by L1 Chabacano learners, but not by L1 Cebuano learners provide strong evidence for the research hypothesis that the transitive subject in object-focus sentence receives the nominative case marking, instead of the genitive. The negative transfer in the transitive subject from L1 Chabacano to L2 Filipino was predicted to occur at the A-argument or the more active core argument of a canonical transitive verb.

An analysis of the errors produced by Cebuano learners revealed an unexpected result that involved a clear case of negative transfer in the form of substitution. An example of nominative-genitive (*sa*), *\*binasag ang bote sa lalake*, shows a transitive sentence in object-focus with both the subject and the object case-marked correctly. However, the genitive case of the transitive subject is unusually marked with *sa*, which in Cebuano is equivalent to the genitive *ng*. Twelve Cebuano participants produced this type of error, while none of the Chabacano participants did so. The difference in frequency of such errors for the two groups was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 12.15, p = .0005$ , and the difference in the number of children who made such errors for the two groups was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 13.64, p = .0002$ .

This type of case marking combination demonstrates that the Cebuano participants tend to use the Cebuano form of the genitive case marker *sa* instead of the Filipino *ng* to mark the transitive subject in object-focus. However, this form of negative transfer is different from the one being studied here, in that only the form of the L1 genitive case marker substitutes the L2 form, and that the case for the transitive subject in object-focus is retained in the genitive case. In other words, there is no negative transfer of the case from L1 to L2, only a transfer of the form of the case.

In addition to these observed patterns of errors in the object-focus sentences, there were also other patterns of errors in sentences in actor-focus. For example, an examination of the Chabacano production data reveals a case of negative transfer in case marking in the patient. This result is additional evidence for the prediction that where L1 and L2 differ in case marking, negative transfer is likely to occur. In particular, we observed the



pattern nominative (agent)-nominative (patient) in a semantically transitive sentence in actor-focus. The example *\*nagtitira ang lalake ang bola* shows that both the agent and the patient are marked by the nominative case, which is not allowed in Filipino. The Cebuanos did not produce any of this type of case marking combination, while the Chabacano group has 21 sentences of this type, produced by 12 participants. The difference in frequency of such errors for the two groups was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 21.45, p < .0001$ , and the difference in the number of children who made such errors for the two groups was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 13.64, p = .0002$ .

The other type of case marking combination showing negative transfer in the P argument is the nominative (patient)-nominative (agent) in which the arguments are reversed (e.g. *\*humihila ang kotse si Mark at si Jennylyn*). No instance of this type was observed in the Cebuano data, while there were nine instances from six Chabacano participants. The difference in frequency of such errors for the two groups was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 9.05, p < .003$ , and the difference in the number of children who made such errors for the two groups was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.38, p = .012$ .

To summarize these findings, the Chabacano participants seem to have the tendency to mark subjects and objects freely in the same way as *el* is used in Chabacano to mark subjects and objects, resulting in its use in environments not permitted by Filipino, and resulting consequently in errors. Their tendency to use the *ang* to mark both the subject and the object raises a case for its overgeneralized use in marking arguments, particularly in the transitive condition.

#### 4. Discussion

The distinction made between Chabacano as an accusative language and Filipino as an ergative language may provide greater insight into how Chabacano learners learn Filipino as an L2. The implication from this difference in the linguistic systems of these two languages directly concerned the acquisition of case marking in Filipino by L1 Chabacano learners, particularly on the subject and object arguments in both intransitive and transitive sentences.

Results from a one-way ANOVA show that all the hypotheses are validated: there is positive transfer for the intransitive subject, and negative transfer for the transitive subject and transitive object in the main group. Negative transfer in case marking in the Chabacano group is further validated by the qualitative analysis of the production data where patterns of case marking combination emerged. In particular, the Chabacano participants tended to transfer their nominative case marking of the transitive subject in object-focus to L2 when the L1 and the L2 diverged in case marking. In addition, they also tended to transfer their L1 accusative case marking of the patient in actor-focus to

L2 nominative. A distinctive type of error resulting from negative transfer in case marking for subjects and objects in the transitive condition is overgeneralization of the nominative *ang* by L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino. The Cebuano participants also demonstrated transference of the Cebuano genitive *sa* in their L1 to mark the transitive subject in the L2. This type of error is substitution arising from negative transfer, but affecting only the form of the case marker and not the type of case marking.

In summary, the results from both the quantitative and the qualitative analyses suggest that the actancy structure does contribute to either ease or difficulty in acquiring case marking rules in the L2, in that, where the L1 and the L2 are identical or similar, facilitating effects would take place, and where they are dissimilar, the learning situation may become difficult because negative transfer may happen. However, the study does not go as far as claiming causal relation between actancy structure and language transfer. What it does put forward is adequate statistical evidence and actual production data to support the claim that the difference in the actancy structure between the L1 Chabacano and L2 Filipino may in fact influence negative transfer in case marking.

On the basis of these results, three conclusions are proposed. First, the findings of this study lend support to the view that positive transfer facilitates the learning of L2 case marking rules in instances when the L1 and L2 are the same such as the case of the intransitive subject. Also, negative transfer may occur when the L1 and the L2 are dissimilar, in this case, in the transitive subject and the transitive object.

Second, this study finds support for the hypothesis in the interaction of actancy structure and language transfer, specifically negative transfer. The difference in the actancy structure between the L1 and the L2 may influence language transfer.

Third, L1 negative transfer identified in the Chabacano learners' incorrect use of case marking in the transitive subject in Filipino may explain the case marking errors they are observed to commit in Filipino.

While the results seem favorable to the predictions in this study, the study also acknowledges its focus solely on L1 and the non-inclusion of other variables such as levels of L2 proficiency. Ellis (1995) explains that while L1 is an important resource of knowledge that learners use to process the L2 input and perform in the L2, it is not the only determinant of SLA. The use of the L1 is dependent on a host of other factors such as learner's stage of development and type of language use. Future studies should consider these variables, as well as "outside" variables proposed by Jarvis (2000) of nine types altogether: age, personality, motivation, and language aptitude, social, educational, and cultural background, language background, type and amount of target language exposure, target language proficiency, language distance between the L1 and target language, task type and area of target use, and prototypicality and markedness of the linguistic feature.

To expand the present research, intermediate and advanced Chabacano and Cebuano

learners of L2 Filipino may be included to test the effects of age and proficiency level. Specifically, these groups are recommended to see if transfer effects remain or disappear as age and proficiency in the L2 increase; that is, to see if negative transfer is manifested beyond the interlanguage stage of learners, or if it is fossilized among older L1 speakers of Chabacano. It would be of interest to pose whether older children actually correct themselves eventually, or whether the errors persist even among adults. Second, it would be insightful to investigate other syntactic aspects of Chabacano that may also create negative transfer. Third, it may be worthwhile to do a comparative examination of production data using a more naturalistic method of elicitation in order to obtain naturally occurring data, and to see if the results coincide with the results of the present study.

Moreover, the results obtained from the PDT may have been influenced by the elicitation prompt, that is, the researcher may have influenced the participants' responses to an extent. To address this possible concern, however, the GJT was also used to provide further verification. Given that the results, particularly in support for negative transfer in case marking in the transitive subject, are all consistent in both tasks, the study can be more confident in suggesting that this phenomenon does occur and that it may be due to the difference in actancy structure between the L1 and the L2.

The results of this study, particularly the one concerning negative transfer, align with previous research studies which investigate a language area where linguistic patterns between an L1 and an L2 differed, and compared with another L1 whose structural nature corresponded with that of the L2 (Helms-Park 2001, 2003, Jarvis & Odlin 2000, McDonald 2000). These studies, among others, show that any difference in performance in the language area between L1 groups concerning a possible case for language transfer resulting in errors may suggest that the difference in the results reflect the differences in the L1s.

Notwithstanding its limitations, the paper contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon of transfer in the L1 Chabacano–L2 Filipino bilingual situation in the Philippines. It presents an empirical explanation for L1 language transfer, particularly negative transfer, as primarily a linguistic phenomenon among L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino, which is unaccounted for. Negative transfer explains their tendency to commit errors in case marking, particularly in the subjects and objects of transitive sentences in Filipino. This study explains by providing actual production data and statistical evidence that negative transfer from L1 to L2 is a linguistic phenomenon among learners of ergative Filipino with an accusative Chabacano language background arising from the difference in the actancy structure between their L1 and the L2.

This study also makes a unique contribution to a small body of research on the acquisition of Philippine languages. The systematic study of the acquisition of Filipino as a L2 is an under-studied area, a dearth that is especially noteworthy considering that

the acquisition of Filipino as an L2 is widespread in several non-Filipino-speaking areas across the archipelago. This study is therefore significant because it attempts to describe second language acquisition in current and specific bilingual situations in the Philippines, providing a better comparison between languages in these bilingual environments. The results from this study provide insight into pedagogy in Austronesian languages, specifically Filipino, particularly in early elementary school, with special consideration to children whose L1 case marking system is different from the L2.

## 5. Conclusion

The distinction made between Chabacano as an accusative language and Filipino as an ergative language provides greater insight into how Chabacano learners learn Filipino as an L2. The recognition of the asymmetry in L1-L2 actancy structure as the factor causing L1 negative transfer to L2 resulting in errors in the L2 draws practical implications for language teaching in Filipino for different L1 speakers in the Philippines. The results of the study imply the need to revisit the teaching of case marking in Filipino to determine whether or not it is represented in instructional materials or teaching practices. If case marking in Filipino is taught in the classroom, it would be insightful to investigate how it is done. This suggests that Filipino teachers handling Chabacano-speaking learners may need to provide explicit explanation and emphasis on the difference between the grammatical systems of Chabacano and Austronesian languages, particularly Filipino. This will require developing instructional materials that integrate explicit comparisons in case marking rules between Chabacano and Filipino. A concrete example would be institutionalizing a program that teaches Chabacano actancy structure together with Filipino actancy structure to Chabacano-speaking children in the early grades to show them where the similarities and differences between their L1 and the L2 lie, to raise “grammatical consciousness” amongst them, and to facilitate learning of the L2.

In general, Filipino teachers may need to consider the role of the L1, the role of input, and the role of instruction that affect SLA when they teach Filipino to students who come from a non-Austronesian language background. As the study suggests, learning Filipino is not too difficult for children who speak a language within the Austronesian family, but not for those whose mother tongue is genetically unrelated to Austronesian and has a grammatical system markedly different from that of the second language he is acquiring. In designing tasks and carrying out lessons to students who are learning Filipino as a second language, but whose L1 differs in grammatical system, the Filipino teacher needs to understand that the interaction of the L1 with the L2 may affect a learner’s performance in the L2.

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# 行為者結構系統對習得第二語言格位標記 之移轉現象的影響： 以查瓦卡諾語及宿霧語為第一語言學習者 習得菲律賓國語格位標記為例

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近年來，在菲律賓語言學的發展過程中，區分了具有賓格行為者結構系統 (accusative actancy structure) 的查瓦卡諾語 (Chabacano) 與大多數具有作格行為者結構系統 (ergative actancy structure) 的語言（如：菲律賓國語 (Filipino)）。這項區隔與格位標記的習得之間有直接的關聯性，特別是與以查瓦卡諾語為第一語言學習者 (L1 Chabacano learners) 習得菲律賓國語中不及物句與及物句的主語與賓語的格位標記的關聯相當明顯。

本研究邀請了五十位講查瓦卡諾語的兒童與五十位講宿霧語 (Cebuano) 的（七至八歲）兒童參與實驗。這些兒童被要求用菲律賓國語來描述及物與不及物的動作；他們也同時被要求對帶有正確或不正確格位標記的及物與不及物句做是否符合（菲律賓國語）語法的判斷。研究結果指出：在不及物句主語（格位標記）的習得上，這兩組受試者均出現「正向移轉」(positive transfer)。但是在及物句主語與賓語（格位標記）的習得上，講查瓦卡諾語的兒童卻出現「負向移轉」(negative transfer)；這結果與講查瓦卡諾語的兒童在講菲律賓國語時「過度概化」(overgeneralize) 查瓦卡諾語的格位標記型式有關。

本文亦討論了這項研究在第二語言教學上的意含，特別是針對這項研究結果在教授菲律賓國語給菲律賓境內以其他語言為第一語言者的意含加以探討。

關鍵詞：查瓦卡諾語，行為者結構系統，移轉，第二語言習得