

Cross-Linguistic Influence in Bilingual Learners: Implications for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in the Philippines

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Abstract

The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in the Philippines requires children to learn the mother tongue, in addition to Filipino and English, in elementary school. Acquiring Filipino as a second language (L2) from a first language (L1) background is not a major challenge for most Filipino children since almost all Philippine languages share the ergative actancy structure. Speakers of accusative Chabacano in Zamboanga City show an exception. In grammaticality judgments and picture description tasks, fifty 7-8-year-old L1 Chabacano learners overgeneralized case marking patterns in Filipino, revealing cross-linguistic influence. An SLA model for bilingual groups of learners with typologically different L1 and L2s argues for ‘grammatical consciousness-raising’ particularly within the first three grades in the elementary. Target grammatical structures can be taught implicitly and explicitly through adequate and meaningful classroom and parental language input within the threshold at which learners have already developed some degree of ability to use the L2.

Keywords: *mother tongue-based multilingual education; cross-linguistic influence; second language acquisition; Zamboangueno Chabacano; bilingualism/multilingualism*

The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) institutionalized in the School Year 2012-2013 all over the Philippines now requires Filipino children to learn the mother tongue (MT) or the lingua franca in the area. It also promotes the primary use of the MT as medium of instruction at the elementary level. Thus, as they grow up, children learn the MT and possibly acquire one or two other regional languages spoken in the area or used at home or in the community. This multilingual ability in Filipino children is further enhanced by the introduction of Filipino and English in elementary school, supported informally by popular media such as television, the Internet, and various forms of literature. The question of whether the MT or the first language (L1) could actually support the acquisition of a second language (L2), especially English, has stirred some skepticism among various stakeholders towards the MTBMLE. However, proponents of bilingualism have articulated the facilitating effects of L1 on the acquisition of L2 (Cummins, 2001; Grosjean & Li, 2013). Psycholinguistic investigations involving bilinguals or multilingual populations also maintain that the L1 poses no detriment to the acquisition of a L2 (Petitto, 2001; Bialystok, 2009).

In the Philippines where Filipino is an official language, most children may not find difficulty acquiring Filipino as a L2 because almost all Philippine languages including Tagalog

(which is the basis for Filipino) are typologically related within the Austronesian language family. Such is not the case for Chabacano with the most number of speakers in and around Zamboanga City in Western Mindanao. Nolasco (2005) singles out Chabacano as characterized by the accusative actancy structure and operating within its ergative and Austronesian-dominant linguistic environment.

Thus, a native speaker of Chabacano who is learning L2 Filipino may show some difficulty acquiring case marking rules in Filipino because the internal structure of his L1 and that of the L2 he is acquiring are dissimilar. Barrios and Bernardo (2012) do find cross-linguistic influence or L1 language transfer, specifically negative transfer in the form of overgeneralizations, among Chabacano children's grammaticality judgments and production of sentences in Filipino. The recognition of this difference in the actancy structure between the L1 and the L2 in the Chabacano-Filipino bilingual situation, as well as the demonstration of cross-linguistic influence or L1 language transfer to explain why young Chabacano learners commit case marking errors in Filipino, can inform the MTBMLE on when and how instructional intervention can be done for bilingual groups in the Philippines, especially when the L1 and the L2 show incongruence in grammatical systems.

In order to demonstrate this point fully, this paper first reports about the phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence or L1 transfer as a factor accounting for the case marking errors observed to be committed by L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino. Next, it proposes a model that describes the process of second language acquisition (SLA) specific to case marking in the Chabacano-Filipino bilingual situation. This model extends beyond cross-linguistic influence or L1 language transfer and incorporates external factors and individual learner differences. Last, it proposes action points for the implementation of the MTBMLE in the Philippines. I argue that mother tongue-based instruction in the Philippines can focus on "grammatical consciousness-raising" (Rutherford, 1987) of both L1 and L2 for different L1 learners particularly within the first three grades in the elementary.

Evidence of cross-linguistic influence in L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino

Cross-linguistic influence or language transfer, as used interchangeably by Odlin (2005), pertains to the influence of similarities and differences between the target language and the source language that has been previously acquired. Selinker (as cited in Jarvis & Odlin, 2000) observes that the term language transfer is a diverse phenomenon that involves input from the target language and universal properties of human language. Jarvis and Odlin (2000) further observe that much of what is called cross-linguistic influence involves retentions: "Whenever challenges of using or understanding a second language arise, learners may retain something from their L1 or some other language to aid in coping with the new challenges" (p. 537). This notion of retention, accordingly, is applicable whether or not the attempt at coping is convergent with the target language (i.e., positive transfer), or divergent (i.e., negative transfer). Positive transfer refers to any facilitating effect on L2 acquisition due to the influence of similarities between L1 and L2. Negative transfer (also called interference) pertains to cross-linguistic influences resulting in errors such as underproduction, overproduction, and miscomprehension or misinterpretation.

As an introduction to the specific language group in question, Lewis, Simons, and Fennig (2014) classify Chabacano as a Spanish-based creole, which is a pidgin language that has become the native language of a group of speakers and used in their day-to-day communication. This phenomenon is characterized by a combination of features. First, the language is marked by

simplifications such as the absence of tense, aspect or gender inflection, the absence of copula, and possibly, phonemic reduction. Second, many grammatical markers sound similar from one creole to another. Third, vocabulary is largely borrowed from another known language but with noticeable semantic changes. Finally, the language may have been in contact with two or more languages during its formation (Molony, 1973). Creoles are usually categorized according to the language from which their vocabulary comes (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992), hence Spanish in the case of Chabacano.

Philippine Creole Spanish dialects under this generic term are Ermiteño (spoken in Ermita), Caviteño (Cavite), Ternateño (Ternate), Davaweño (Davao), Cotabato Chabacano (Cotabato), and Zamboangueno (Zamboanga) (Lipski, 1987). Ethnologue (2004) reports that Ermiteño has become extinct, that while many still speak Caviteño, nearly all of them speak Tagalog, and that Davaweño may be extinct. In Cotabato City, only a few elderly people still spoke Chabacano (Durante, 2000). In 1987, Lipski reported that among the variants, Zamboangueno was the only one surviving. In almost twenty years thereafter, Genuino (2005) discloses that Chabacano still survives, stabilized by intergenerational language transmission, continuous use of the language in different domains, and local government policy. Today, Chabacano is described as having the language vitality level of 4 (Educational), which means that the language is “in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education” (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014).

Zamboangueno is spoken largely in the Zamboanga peninsula of Mindanao, which includes Zamboanga City, Tungawan, Ipil, Kabasalan, Siay, Margosatubig, Malangas, Lapuyan, Buug, Alicia, as well as in Basilan including Isabelita, Lamitan, Maluso, and Malamawi. Rubino (as cited in Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014) reports that there are 359,000 people who speak Zamboangueno Chabacano. This number makes Zamboangueno the only actively spoken creole in the Philippines and contributes significantly to Chabacano being the largest Spanish-derived creole in the world. In this paper and hereafter, Chabacano refers to the Zamboangueno variety spoken in Zamboanga City and its environs.

The case of Chabacano in relation to the languages with which it is in contact is interesting. To begin with, Chabacano has no genetic relation to the Austronesian languages, such as Filipino and Cebuano, scattered throughout the Philippine archipelago. Being a creole and developed in a contact situation, Chabacano derives a 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 (Barrios & Bernardo, 2012). Some grammatical properties, which are obviously developed from Filipino and Cebuano, are word order, plural personal pronoun system, nominative noun marking, and plural noun marking. Rubino (2005) claims that Visayan and Samal account for many of its indigenous vocabulary and morphosyntactic features.

How Chabacano marks its subjects and objects is 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. In recent years, linguistic analysis has focused on describing Philippine languages as morphologically ergative (Reid & Liao, 2004), prompting Forman (2001) to ask whether or not Chabacano fits into the ergative analysis. Analyzing Chabacano actancy vis-à-vis ergative Philippine languages, Nolasco (2005) categorically states that Chabacano is accusative.

To demonstrate further, actancy structure refers to the way in which the subject and the object noun phrases are marked in a sentence (Crowley, 1997). Kaplan (1995) demonstrates that in the accusative actancy structure, the intransitive and the transitive subjects are marked in the

same way and are distinguished from the transitive object. In ergative, however, the intransitive subject and the transitive object are marked in the same way, while these two functions are distinguished from the transitive subject. In order to see the case markings more clearly and to distinguish the sentences according to their respective actancy systems, the arguments in the intransitive and transitive sentences are marked distinctively. The subject (“S”) for the intransitive verb is marked in the same way as the subject (“A”) for the transitive verb. Both subjects receive the same nominative case marking. The direct object (“P”) for the transitive verb is marked differently by the direct object marker (“P”), which receives the accusative case marking. The treatment of the direct object of transitive verbs distinctly from the subject of both transitive and intransitive verbs makes Chabacano an accusative language, which is different from ergative Filipino and Cebuano which are both Philippine-type languages in which the transitive subject receives the ergative case marking. The following sentences illustrate these differences:

- (1) Ya durmi el gato.
 Asp-sleep NOM=cat
 S
- (2) Ya kome el gato konel pescao.
 Asp-eat NOM=cat ACC=fish
 A P

The subject *el gato* ‘the cat’ for the intransitive verb *ya durmi* ‘slept’ in (1) is marked in the same way as the subject *el gato* ‘the cat’ for the transitive verb *ya kome* ‘ate’ in (2). Both subjects receive the nominative case marking. The direct object *konel pescao* ‘the fish’ for the transitive verb *ya kome* ‘ate’ in (2) is marked differently by the direct object marker *konel*, which receives the accusative case marking. Nolasco (2005) asserts that Chabacano inherits the accusative feature from Spanish and Portuguese, both of which are accusative languages.

The proposition that the acquisition of case marking rules in the Chabacano-Filipino bilingual is affected by the difference in the actancy structure of these two languages is supported in grammaticality judgments and picture descriptions tasks among a sample of L1 Chabacano learners learning Filipino as a L2 (Barrios & Bernardo, 2012). Fifty 7-8-year-old learners who spoke Chabacano as their L1 overgeneralized case marking patterns when speaking in their L2 Filipino, committing errors such as **pinunit sila ng papel* ‘they tore the paper’. Results from the grammaticality judgment task revealed that the Cebuano speakers (M = 2.36, SD = 1.935) (employed for comparison purposes) made more correct judgments regarding the incorrect ergative case marking for the transitive subject than the Chabacano speakers (M = 1.64, SD = 1.699), $F(1, 98) = 3.91, p = .051$. Similarly, the picture description task shows that the Cebuano speakers (M = 6.64, SD = 2.310) outperformed the Chabacano speakers (M = 4.38, SD = 2.725) in the use of the ergative case marking, and this difference was statistically significant, $F(1, 98) = 20.12, p < .0001$. This error in SLA is attributed to cross-linguistic influence or language transfer from accusative L1 to ergative L2. The L1 knowledge of the Chabacano-speaking learner of L2 Filipino acts as the primary source of constraint because the actancy structure is markedly different from that of the target language. Filipino requires a genitive case marking for the transitive subject, whereas Chabacano uses the nominative case. As a consequence, Chabacano learners of Filipino tend to use the nominative case in place of the

appropriate genitive case marker for the transitive subject, resulting in negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs, too, particularly on the use of the nominative case marker to mark subjects in the intransitive construction and to objects in the transitive construction, both being similarly case-marked in the L1 and the L2.

Quantitative analyses of grammaticality judgments and production data among L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino reveal that divergent structures in actancy in both languages contribute to difficulty in acquiring case marking rules in the L2 resulting from negative transfer. This finding aligns with previous research which investigates groups of bilingual learners in which the linguistic patterns between the L1 and the L2 differed, and compared with another group whose L1 structure corresponded the L2's: Jarvis and Odlin, 2000; McDonald, 2000; Helms-Park, 2001; Helms-Park, 2003; and Jung, 2004. These studies reveal that any difference in language performance between L1 groups concerning a case for cross-linguistic influence or L1 language transfer resulting in errors suggests that the difference in the results reflect the differences in the L1s.

A model describing language acquisition in L1 Chabacano-L2 Filipino learners in the Philippines

The above-mentioned findings make an important contribution to studies involving learners of Chabacano in the Philippines. First, it presents an empirical explanation for their apparent difficulty in learning Filipino, specifically their tendency to overgeneralize case marking rules in Filipino, which are attributed to cross-linguistic influence or L1 language transfer. It further demonstrates that negative transfer from L1 to L2 is a linguistic phenomenon among learners from an accusative language background acquiring ergative Filipino that acts as a primary internal factor in their acquisition of a second language. What I propose at this point is that language acquisition of L2 Filipino by Chabacano-speaking learners is confounded, at least in case marking rules by, primarily, the difference in actancy structure, and hence the phenomenon of language transfer from L1 to L2. At the same time, it interacts with various other factors grouped into external and individual differences influencing SLA. External factors include input (Flege & Liu, 2001; White, 1987) and interaction (Gass, 2005), including instructional variables, which include feedback (Mackey, Gass, & McDonough, 2000; Iwashita, 2003), awareness (Leow, 2000), and type of instruction (Lyster, 2004; Erlam, 2003). Psycho-social factors such as social and psychological distancing as discussed in Schumann (1978) are also external factors to consider. Individual differences form another set of variables in SLA. This group puts together age, motivation, use of learning strategies, and aptitude (Dornyei & Skehan, 2005). Research shows that each of these factors is interdependent and operates in combination with one or more of the other factors. SLA develops in combination with, to borrow from Toth (2000), "independent, yet cooperating" factors such as processing constraints, instruction, individual learner differences, feedback, awareness, and input.

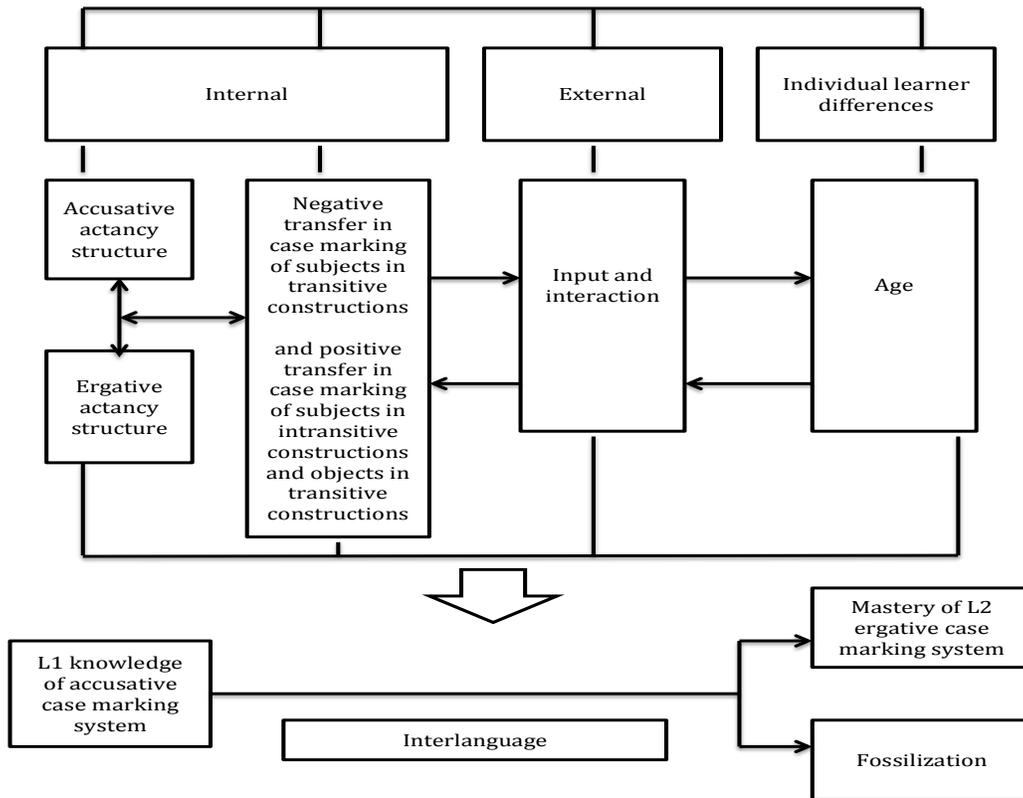


Figure 1. A model for explaining L2 Filipino case marking acquisition in L1 Chabacano-speaking learners

Figure 1 shows the framework that contextualizes cross-linguistic influence or L1 language transfer within the larger SLA process and among the many variables at play in SLA in the Chabacano-Filipino bilingual situation. The horizontal line represents the continuum of the learner’s development in attaining target language mastery, which begins from his L1 knowledge, through an interlanguage phase, and off towards L2 mastery or, possibly, fossilization. The accusative actancy structure of the learners’ L1 influences their learning of ergative L2 specifically in case marking, resulting in negative transfer in transitive subjects and positive transfer in intransitive subjects and transitive objects. L1 language transfer is internal and cognitive in nature and is considered central in the process of L2 acquisition, hence first among the factors in the continuum. Second language acquisition may also interact as well with other semantic and pragmatic features of the languages such as tense, aspect, mode, reference, information status, and the like.

At any point and at any order along this phase in the continuum operate two other factors: external (e.g. input, interaction, and social factors), and individual learner differences (e.g. age, level of motivation to learn the L2, use of learning strategies, and aptitude). These two factors work in combination with the internal constraints, which collectively and subsequently influence the interlanguage of the learner. If these factors are not given proper and adequate intervention,

both internally (such as in terms of learners' motivation or interest), and externally (for example, through the effective form of instruction), the learner's competence will stay on a plateau, and some of his errors may be fossilized as he grows up. On the other hand, if the intervention is strong enough to override the effects of the intervening factors, the learner will reach native-like mastery of the case marking rules of the target language.

MTBMLE implementation in the Philippines: Grammar pedagogy for different L1 speakers

The proposed model of SLA for L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino draws implications for the MTBMLE program in the Philippines, specifically for the first three grades in the elementary for different L1 speakers in the Philippines. The MTBMLE is the Philippine government's "banner program in education", supported by legislation through the passage of Republic Act 10533, otherwise known as the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013". Anchored on the basic principle of "starting where the children are", MTBMLE uses language that learners are most comfortable and familiar with in learning early concepts, arguing that children are more actively engaged in class activities and thus learn better, and that they acquire a L2 faster when they are taught first in the language that they understand. Cummins (2001) emphasizes the mutual dependence of MT and school language, arguing that they actually work together in the child's language development, contrary to the misconception that learning two languages at the same time will diminish ability in either or both languages. "Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue they have learned in the home to the school language. From the point of view of children's development of concepts and thinking skills, the two languages are interdependent" (pp. 17-18). Cummins adds that the level of development the child achieves in his use of the mother tongue is a strong predictor of his or her second language development.

Bilingualism research, notably Ellen Bialystok's life work on the effects of bilingualism, provides strong theoretical support in effecting this major curriculum reform in the country. Being bilingual is found to develop cognitive performance as it enhances executive functioning, particularly conflict resolution and executive control, primarily because producing bilingual speech requires the constant involvement of the executive control system (i.e. inhibition, shifting of mental sets, and updating information in working memory) in order to manage attention to the target language (Bialystok, 2009).

The multilingual feature of the Philippines' MTBMLE program fits into one of Hamers and Blanc's (2004) three broad categories of bilingual education: "Instruction is given first in L1 and the pupil is taught until such time as he is able to use L2 as a means of learning" (p. 322). According to the Department of Education, the learner's dominant language is used as the language of learning in Kindergarten to Grade 3 while language proficiency in L2 Filipino and English is developed at this stage as well but very gradually. In the course of their language acquisition, Filipino children learn to speak many languages by exposure and government policy, oftentimes simultaneously. As proposed earlier, learning Filipino as a L2 is not too difficult for most children, as the language is commonly used in many domains even if the *lingua franca* in the area is a regional language. Children and their caregivers are especially exposed to many sources of information and entertainment in Filipino, such that most households end up in simultaneous bilingualism, acquiring multiple languages at the same time. Bilingualism, which Grosjean (2010) considers a cover term for multilingualism, or plurilingualism (Bhatia &

Ritchie, 2013), gives many Filipino learners an advantage later on in life in many domains including business, education, politics, among others.

The other factor that appears to help facilitate language acquisition in L2 Filipino is that almost all Philippine languages are typologically related within the Austronesian family of languages that share the ergative actancy structure. Barrios and Bernardo (2012) reveal that Zamboangueno speakers of Chabacano in Zamboanga City demonstrate an exception. While the same conditions apply to Zamboangueno Chabacano speakers, such as exposure to relatively the same amount and quality of input in Filipino, primarily through media, the internal structure of their L1 is markedly different from their L2. Specifically, the actancy structure of the L1 is different from the ergative structure in the L2 Filipino where cross-linguistic influence from the L1 is evident as negative transfer in transitive subjects in case marking rules.

The same conclusion may be said about other bilingual environments whose L1 and L2 grammatical structures show some discrepancy in any linguistic area such as morphosyntax, semantics, and lexicon. In order to address potential problems for these learners, I argue that mother tongue-based instruction in the Philippines for learners with typologically different L1s and L2s can focus on “grammatical consciousness-raising” (Rutherford, 1987) particularly within the first three grades in the elementary. Rutherford explains that consciousness-raising can aide the learner in distinguishing differences between language universals and language-specific constraints. For example, all languages have basic word order containing the universal constituents subject, object and verb. In some languages such as Hebrew, the verb constituent precedes subject and object, while in others such as Japanese, the verb follows subject and object. In English, the verb divides subject and object, while Spanish word order is relatively free. To demonstrate where consciousness-raising is valuable, Rutherford explains that while a L2 learner of Spanish from a L1 English background notices immediately that Spanish has a free word order, a Spanish learner of L2 English does not at first notice the difference since this feature is absent in his first language. Raising the learner’s awareness and sensitivity to this difference in word order between these two languages can strengthen his perception of language-specific constraints in the L1 and the L2.

In a bilingual language environment in which there is a marked discrepancy in the grammatical system between the L1 and the L2, grammatical consciousness-raising of the target grammatical structure can be done to enrich students’ learning experience. Moreover, it can be done simultaneously on two levels – first, in school, and second, at home - through input and within the first three grades in the elementary and ideally extending beyond the primary years of schooling to high school at which time learners have enough mastery of the L2. Grammatical structures that are found to be a challenge to certain groups of bilingual children can be taught implicitly and explicitly through adequate and meaningful classroom input and parental language input within the threshold at which learners have already developed some degree of ability to use the L2. Ellis (2006) explains that from the perspective of SLA, there is value in focusing on target grammatical structures rather than teaching grammar all together: “Teachers should endeavor to focus on those grammatical structures that are known to be problematic to learners rather than try to teach the whole of grammar” (p. 102). In addition, there is value in integrating form-focused instruction (FFI) into subject matter to allow learners to “notice” grammatical features that they have some trouble with. Ellis (2006, as cited in Lyster, 2004) describes FFI as any incidental instructional activity intended to induce learners to pay attention to linguistic form with which they experience some difficulty.

In the specific case of L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino, primary school teachers can explore the teaching of case marking in Filipino and Chabacano to determine whether it is represented or not in instructional materials or teaching practices. It is crucial for teachers to consider students who come from a non-Filipino or non-Tagalog language background, and how languages work in order to effectively facilitate language acquisition. In addition, teachers can employ corrective feedback in their interactions with students. Corrective feedback is “best conducted using a mixture of implicit and explicit feedback types that are both input based and output based” (Ellis, 2006, p. 102). In designing tasks and in carrying out lessons to learners of L2 Filipino, teachers handling Chabacano-speaking learners may need to provide implicit and explicit instruction on the difference between the grammatical systems of Chabacano and Filipino in oral fluency activities, which is the focus in the subject area of Filipino (and English) by Grade 1. This will entail developing instructional materials that integrate comparisons in case marking rules between Chabacano and Filipino.

This proposition recalls White’s (1987) strong contention that practitioners should not be afraid of providing explicit structural language teaching, citing the absence of a comprehensive theory in SLA. As Ellis (2006) puts it, the acquisition of the grammatical system of the L2 in itself is a complex process and can be supported by means of a variety of approaches, including grammar teaching.

Second, input from school and the home (De Houwer, 2007; Pearson, 2007) can focus on meaning and function of target grammatical structures through written materials that appeal to children’s reading preferences. These can focus on L2 texts with basic vocabulary and phrases and stories that children can read with understanding. “The grammar taught should be one that emphasizes not just form but also the meanings and uses of different grammatical structures” (Ellis, 2006, p. 102). In addition, reading materials can be introduced both in the L1 and the L2 at the same time. It is in fact facilitative when reading is introduced in two languages at the same time, contrary to a misconception that bilingual reading programs can confuse the child. Research points to a carryover or transfer of reading skills from one language to another and that reading is a “consolidator” of children’s language skills, according to Bialystok (as cited in Pearson, 2007).

Moreover, adequate input in the target language from home and school is found to be effective. In a study reported by Pearson (2007), different bilingual groups with more home and school input were found to match monolinguals of that language than those with less support from the home and at school. Therefore, the more input the home can provide to supplement school input, the better results can be expected of the learners in developing L2 proficiency.

Finally, L2 grammar can be taught at a stage when learners have already acquired some degree of ability to use the L2 and when they are beginning to figure out rules in the L1 and the L2. Ellis (2006) remarks, “Grammar is best taught to learners who have already acquired some ability to use the language (i.e. intermediate level) rather than to complete beginners” (p. 102). He adds, however, that grammar can be taught through corrective feedback as soon as learners begin to use the L2 productively. The first three grades in the elementary is the best period for L2 language proficiency because it is at this stage when they are learning Filipino formally, at the same time learning new concepts in their mother tongue. It is also the stage when their multilingual abilities are developed since they are learning multiple languages at the same time, increasing their metalinguistic abilities in figuring out rules for themselves as they use language productively in authentic and meaningful interactions with their peers and teachers. However, L2 instruction should definitely extend beyond the first three years in order to facilitate

acquisition in the transition to high school in which the L2 becomes the primary medium of instruction.

The model in Figure 1 summarizes these aforementioned elements into three. Any instructional intervention for bilingual groups of young learners should consider internal and external factors and individual differences. In the case of L1 Chabacano learners of L2 Filipino in Zamboanga City and its environs, there is a need for teachers to recognize the difference in the grammatical systems of the L1 and the L2 in the language acquisition of their students. Specifically, it is found that Chabacano learners transfer their L1 accusative to L2 ergative through cross-linguistic influence or transfer, resulting in the overgeneralization of the nominative *ang* 'the' in case marking the transitive nominative. At the same time, their L2 acquisition interacts with input and interaction as external factors in the process. Research reveals that it is necessary to provide learners adequate and meaningful input in school and to reinforce this by means of L2 input at home. Finally, the younger learners are exposed to the L2 through grammar teaching at an age when they can already productively use the L2 and when they are beginning to figure out grammar rules in their L1 and L2, the better results are expected. Since the L2 is gradually introduced starting in the first three grades in the elementary according to the MTBMLE program, this is the best time then to make explicit and implicit grammatical instruction specifically in the L2 to develop proficiency in the L2.

Conclusion

Young Zamboangueno bilingual learners in Western Mindanao in the Philippines are found to overgeneralize case marking rules in Filipino. This error is explained by cross-linguistic influence or language transfer from Chabacano, their L1, to Filipino as their L2. Both Chabacano and Filipino are Philippine languages, but Chabacano is especially situated in the linguistic history of the Philippines being a creole and having developed in a contact situation. Actancy is one grammatical feature that distinguishes Chabacano from the rest of the Philippine languages that exhibit the ergative actancy structure. Chabacano is found to be accusative, and speakers of this language constantly deal with speakers in the region of other Philippine languages, not to mention learn Filipino formally in school. With the MTBMLE now requiring children to learn the MT and the second languages, it is an opportune time for language teachers to consider the above-mentioned findings in instruction in order to facilitate acquisition of the L2. Teachers can benefit from understanding how internal language phenomena such as cross-linguistic influence or language transfer can work with external language acquisition variables such as input and interaction, as well as age. In this specific bilingual situation, the Chabacano-Filipino bilingual can be given adequate and meaningful input and interaction at school, at home and by parents primarily, at the age when they have enough linguistic resources to figure out how rules work between languages.

The question of what accounts for specific observed linguistic manifestations within the realistic contexts of different bilingual situations in the Philippines resulting from acquiring an L2 is a research area that is largely unexplored, hence, promising. Psycholinguistic research can look at other language areas in SLA for specific bilingual groups. In the present case of L1 Chabacano-L2 Filipino learners, for example, Rubino (2005) claims that the use of special verbs such as the auxiliary *puede* 'can' and serial verb constructions in Chabacano compensates for its lack of a complex verbal morphology. For example, accidental causation in Chabacano employs auxiliaries and serial verb constructions (e.g., *ya puede yo hace quema conel camiseta* 'I accidentally burned the shirt'). It would be insightful to investigate if these special verbs

manifest themselves in the interlanguage in L2 Filipino, and if so, in what ways they would be manifested. Similar research should be able to provide a more comprehensive explanation of SLA in the Philippine context, not only to empirically explain why some learners seem to exhibit difficulty in learning a L2, but also to develop a system of instructional intervention in the already established MTBMLE in order to facilitate learners' acquisition of the L2.

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