

Review of Robert A. Scebold, 2003, *Central Tagbanwa, A Philippine Language on the Brink of Extinction: Sociolinguistics, Grammar, and Lexicon. Philippine Journal of Linguistics, Special Monograph Issue, Number 48. Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines.*

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This study presents a superb documentation of the semifinal stages of "language death," whereby the percentage of speakers decreases from generation to generation. Three decisive factors leading to language death are outlined (p. 6) and, sad to say, three out of three have been met. Central Tagbanwa has been losing ground to Kuyonon (the regional trade language) and Tagalog (the national language). The individual family biographies are detailed and instructive. There is a faint glimmer of hope insofar as there are still some speakers who wish for their offspring and progeny to learn the language. But despite such noble aspirations, children are not using it among themselves, so we can legitimately deduce that the language is teetering on the brink of extinction, but not quite yet off the edge. There are at least a hundred speakers left within a pool of less than a thousand ethnic Tagbanwas. The language is clearly moribund, having lost out in most domains, and whose only growth is the adoption of an ever-increasing pool of loanwords. The future of this language is dismal if population influxes, economic developments, intermarriage, schooling, and the like continue unabated. Any efforts at language revival would depend entirely on the speakers themselves. Even in their ancestral areas, they are outnumbered 20 to 1!

Hence, Scebold's is a welcome study. The sociolinguistic situation, the underpinnings of the grammar, a decent swath of lexicon, and three interlinear texts, give us a good glimpse into what makes Tagbanwa a unique and distinct Philippine speech variety. If only more of the world's dying languages could get this kind of treatment! One could, of course, like Dickens' Oliver, ask for more - perhaps, something like Ken Hale's massive encyclopedic dictionary of Warlpiri (central Australia) to be published posthumously. But a project like that has taken over twenty years, and has still not been finalized. Scebold's fine survey was undertaken and completed in two years (1991-1993). I, for one, am grateful

¹ I am deeply grateful to Rex Johnson of SIL for the invitation and opportunity to review this book and to Sue McQuay and Steve Quackenbush, also of SIL, for their careful proofreading and many suggestions for the improvement of an earlier draft of this review. Any and all residual errors are my responsibility.

to him, his wife, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), for immortalizing this language; surely future generations of Palawan's Central Tagbanwas will also have *utang na loob* (Tagalog for 'a deeply felt indebtedness').

The book starts with a brief historical statement, pointing out that the lifestyle of early Tagbanwas was slash-and-burn (*kaingin*) agriculture. The bulk of the discussion is perforce limited to the American era (1898) and onwards, including the ravages of World War II and the more recent influx of immigrant Filipino farmers. Previously, the establishment of a Spanish community in Taytay helps explain the extent of Spanish loanwords directly in this language (i.e. not borrowed via other Philippine languages).

Then follows the sociolinguistic survey I have already discussed in the opening paragraph. The phonology in Chapter 3 is concise and exemplary, and has a direct practical application in the establishment of a Tagbanwa orthography. While stress is clearly not phonemic in this language, the author appropriately describes stress phenomena, which are in free variation and probably serve to establish intonational units (e.g. word boundaries). Phonemes, allophones, and morphophonemic changes are all treated with aplomb.

The grammatical overview in Chapter 4 is as good as any I have seen on a Philippine language with similar scope. For example, his treatment of nominals includes not only the case-marking particles, but also common derivational affixes, with every morph exemplified. A later section on noun phrases (4.3) summarizes their syntactic properties and another one on nominalization (4.4.2.6) how entire clauses can function as this part of speech. Both pronouns and demonstratives are adequately covered. The section on verbs (4.2.3) surely includes all the morphology associated with aspect, focus, voice, and mood; the author correctly establishes the differences among *mag-*, *-um-*, and *mang-* as highly idiomatic, the stuff of which verb stem classification is ultimately made. In an overview of this type, such a morphology-first treatment is totally justified.

I applaud his treatment of all interrogatives in a single section (4.4.2.5) because they traditionally straddle every part of speech. This treatment is thorough and well presented. Similarly, the presentation of negatives in one place (4.4.3) is a welcome diversion from studies that split negation up under various parts of speech, thereby missing the overriding semantic unity that students of a language seem to crave. The final section (4.5) entitled "Semantic Relations" covers a broad range of conjunctions and conjunctive expressions, a dozen in all, arranged semantically.

Particularly commendable are the examples throughout the grammar. None are contrived or forced. All come from real-world texts (mostly oral, but some written) and make for interesting reading and demonstrate compelling analytical skills.

Is anything missing? I was surprised not to find a distinction between singular and plural personal markers (e.g. Tagalog *si* vs. *sina*, *ni* vs. *nina*, *kay* vs.

kina). If such does not obtain, it would have merited a footnote since it is otherwise so common throughout the archipelago.

Although mentioned in his treatment of modifiers (4.2.2) and partially exemplified on page 49, numerals strike me as a special form of nominal. Regardless of one's theoretical approach to them, numbers are usefully treated in a single section illustrating how people count (and how far) in their cardinal and ordinal forms. Another exciting sociolinguistic aspect of enumeration in the Philippines is the degree to which Spanish (or even English) words have been borrowed, and in what domains they get used (e.g. telling time with Spanish *alas dos* and selling with English *payb-pipti*).

I am not sure if there is a negative imperative in Tagbanwa (some languages indeed do not have such a construction, e.g. Rwanda (African Bantu), on which I am currently working. Reference to it, or the lack thereof, would fit nicely in the section on negatives.

Lastly, many Philippine languages have discourse particles, usually one or two syllable words that subtly inject the speaker's point-of-view into an utterance. These are forms such as Tagalog *palá* 'oh!' {surprise}, *nga* 'indeed!' {emphasis}. Several -- the temporal ones, *na* {completive}, *pa* {incompletive}, and *inta* {limiting}, *talaba* {verification} -- are found in the Lexicon, but would have further enriched the final section on semantics if discussed together.

But this book should not be judged on what it might lack. It must be praised for what it presents and in that it exists at all. The brief lexicon of Chapter 5 and its accompanying English-Central Tagbanwa Index is modestly entitled. There are plenty of vocabulary items that serve not only to record the language, but also to allow comparativists to identify its genetic relationships and cross-temporal ties. What is most satisfying is to note that the two wordlists are internally consistent. I once worked with an Armenian-English English-Armenian Dictionary written by two sisters, who must have divided their work and not consulted with each other. While the Armenian-English section had two different words for 'factory,' the English-Armenian section lacked any such headword! With Scebold's work, I randomly double checked examples from the grammar and found every word was covered in both the lexicon and the index.

Another commendable area is the frank and open presentation of sexually-oriented vocabulary, which many studies censor:

English	Central Tagbanwa	Lexicon	Index
honeymoon ²	urag	yes	yes
penis ³	?? utin ??	no	no

² This word is not further defined, but based on cognates in other central Philippine languages, probably means {sexual activity} or {sexual desire}.

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sperm	buras	yes	yes
vagina	ateg	yes	yes

The majority of the lexemes presented allow comparativity with Reid (1971) or later SIL wordlists. In seeking which Philippine languages might be Central Tagbanwa's closest relatives, the availability of such a database is critical for any comparison. Thus from the first part of Reid's list come the following alongside Palawan Batak (Pal-Btk) and the two Tagbanwas, Kalamian (Kal) and Aborlan (Abr).

Central Tagb.	English	Pal-Btk	Kal + Abr
data			
avaka	abaca	7abaka7	Kal, Abr
7abaka			
apon	afternoon	7apun	Kal, Abr
7apun			
intanan	all	tanani; pulus	Kal tanan,
Abr mu7sa7			
iteg	anger	7iseg	Kal silag, Abr
dala			
burubuko #	ankle	pangipangil	Abr
bengelbengel,			
			Kal talinga
yang kakay			
tuvay	answer	tubay	Kal tuBal, Abr
tubag			
Ø	anus => buttocks	buli7, 7eyep	Abr buli7, Kal
buyuBbuyu7			
mamaken	areca nut => betel nut	mamaken	Abr
mama7en, Kal bunga7			
eya, makaeya	ashamed	7eya7	Abr 7eya7,
Kal 7eyak			
avo	ashes	7abu = ash	Abr 7abu, Kal
kaBu7			
buklod #	back	gereng	Kal buku7,
Abr gereng			
damangen #	bad	makawat	Kal malain,
Abr mara7era7et			
punti	banana	punti	Kal punti7,
Abr punti			

³ This word seems to have been inadvertently omitted. Based on the evidence of both genetically and geographically close languages the form is probably *utin*.

kulit	bark	kulit	Abr kulit, Kal
7ulit			
diho, panas #	bathe	pa7yu	Kal diGu7,
Abr pa7yu			
Ø	belly	tina7i	Kal tian, Abr
beteng			
tehed	betel leaf	seged, buyu	Kal teGed,
Abr buyu7			
Ø	betel chew	mamak	Kal mamaken,
Abr pagma7ma7			
dakulay	big => large	dakula7	Kal, Abr
dakula7			
dayamdang #	bird	manmanuk	Kal lamlam,
Abr manumanuk			
ahed #	bite	bangki7	Kal keGet,
Abr kagat			

And from the end of Reid's list, further such exemplification:

bavay	woman => female	babay	Kal baBay,
Abr babay			
kayo	wood	kayu	Abr kayu, Kal
7ayu7			
kahulangan #	woods => forest	talun	Kal, Abr talun
bitala	word, language	7ampang	Kal bitala7,
Abr 7ampang			
trabaho	work	7ubra7	Kal 7ubra7,
Abr buat			
luloy	worm (earth)	lu7luy	Kal luluy, Abr
7ulud			
taon	year	ta7un	Kal takun,
Abr ta7un			
dulaw #	yellow	makalawag	Kal madulaw,
Abr makunit			
kaapon #	yesterday	7iat 7apun	Kal
nungapun, Abr kagabi7i			

Note how some unusual functors also seem to favor Palawan Batak and then Kalamian Tagbanwa, two languages that are in closest proximity to Central Tagbanwa:

belag, belahing	not (so)	belag	Kal belag, Abr
7engga			

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indamal tomorrow 7indamar Kal 7andamal,
Abr dedelem

From this brief "judgment by inspection" (see Dyen, 1953, p. 580; Zorc, 1982, p. 306f), I would conclude that the closest genetic relative is Palawan Batak -- and these languages then form a subgroup with Palawano and Molbog, that I have elsewhere called PALAWAN (Zorc, 1977, p. 34) or PALAWANIC (Zorc, 1986, p. 157). However, I would attribute the numerous similarities with Kalamian Tagbanwa to centuries of geographic proximity. The Kalamianic group (which includes Agutaynen) shows some unique sound changes from earlier proto languages, such as PPH *R > l, PPH *q > k, and PPH *k > Ø. These changes are reflected sporadically in Central Tagbanwa, presumably due to the loan process, but are by no means regular. In fact, their word *tuway* 'answer' from PPH *tubaR shows y < *R which is otherwise a shift noted in Mindoro (north Mangyan) and southern Luzon (Kapampangan and Sambal). Several millennia ago, prior to the movement of Bisayans and Tagalogs throughout the central Philippines, a Palawan-Mindoro axis may well have been a reality. The main changes, which are shared by Palawano, Molbog, and Batak are *R > g (intervocally -h-), *q > glottal stop and thence zero, with *k remaining k. One change unique to Central Tagbanwa (among Palawanic languages) is the shift of *s > t. The data in the table below show what lovely "grist for the mill" is made available by Scebold's exciting survey into a heretofore unrecorded language.⁴ Forms that I believe to be borrowings (mostly from Kalamianic, except where *R > y) are put into parentheses.

Shift	Central Tagbanwa	English	PPH
*a > a	ayep	animal	*hayep
*a > a	dangdang	heat	*dangdang
*a > a	uBan	gray hair	*quban
*b > b	biBig	lower lip	*bibiR
*b > b	(binik)	seed	*binhiq
*-b- > B	biBig	lower lip	*bibiR
*-b- > B	uBan	gray hair	*quban
*b > b	bulBol	body hair	*bulbul
*d > d	duhi	thorn	*duRi
*d > d	tukod	stump	*tukud
*d > d	dangdang	heat	*dangdang
(*-d- > l	bitala)	word, language	*bisada
*-d- > r	urag	honeymoon	*udaR 'lust'

⁴ Time permits only a cursory survey. The treatment of intervocalic -d- (< PPH *-d- or *-j-) is here tentative at best. Analogy, borrowing, and leveling render the determination of these reflexes in most Philippine languages highly problematic (see Zorc, 1987).

arnal,	*e > e	ayep	animal	*hayep
	*e > e	eya	shame	*heyaq
Zorc,	(*e > o /u	look)	tears	*luheq
awan	*e > o /u	putod	navel	*pusej
ibog,	[assimilation]			
Zorc,	*g > -h-	dumalaha	pullet	*dumalaga <
with	*dalaRa			
ianic	*h > Ø	avavaw	shallow	*ha-babaw
from	*h > Ø	ayep	animal	*hayep
> Ø.	*h > Ø	dua	two	*duha
y due	*i > i	biBig	lower lip	*bibiR
tuway	*i > i	(binik)	seed	*binhiq
ted in	*j > d	putod	navel	*pusej
nbal).	*j > l	ngalan	name	*ngajan
glogs	*k > k	ikan	fish	*[h]ikan
been	*k > k	namok	mosquito	*ñamuk
Batak	*k > k	tukod	stump	*tukud
ith *k	*l > l	kulit	bark	*kulit
wanic	*l > l	bulan	moon	*bulan
lovely	*l > l	kahulangan #	woods	*ka-gudang-an
nto a	*m > m	namok	mosquito	*ñamuk
nostly	*ñ > n	namok	mosquito	*ñamuk
	*n > n	ngalan	name	*ngajan
	*ng > ng	ngalan	name	*ngajan
	*ng > ng	dangdang	heat	*dangdang
	*p > p	ayep	animal	*hayep
ng	*p > p	putod	navel	*pusej
	*q > Ø	avo	ashes	*qabuh
	*q > Ø	eya	shame	*heyaq
	*q > Ø	taon	year	*taqun
	*q > Ø	uBan	gray hair	*quban
	(*q > k	binik)	seed	*binhiq
	(*q > k	ki7log)	egg	*qiteluR
	(*q > k	lintak)	leech	*(qa)lim(a)taq
	(*q > k	look)	tears	*luheq
ng	*r > r	burubuko	ankle	*CVrV-buku
ust'	*R > g	biBig	lower lip	*bibiR
	*R > g	ki7log	egg	*qiteluR
	*R > g	iteg	anger	*iseR
	*R > -h-	avahat /abagat/	monsoon wind	*habaRat
r *-j-) is	*R > -h-	bahang	molar	*baRqang
of these	*R > -h-	behat	husked rice	*beRas
	*R > -h-	duhi /dugi/	thorn	*duRi

(*R > l	talang)	rib	*taRyang
(*R > l	tshilab)	belch	*tiR7ab
(*R > y	biyat)	weight	*beR7at
(*R > y	tuvay)	answer	*tubaR
*s > t	iteg	anger	*iseR
*s > t	teret	crush lice	*tedes
*t > t	taon	year	*taqun
*t > t	tukod	stump	*tukud
*u > o	tukod	stump	*tukud
*u > u	uBan	gray hair	*quban
*w > w	avavaw	shallow	*ha-babaw
*y > y	ayep	animal	*hayep

I trust that my enthusiasm for this book has pervaded this review. Both author and publisher deserve accolades for the lack of typographical errors. The only one I noticed was on the seventh line from the bottom on page 30: 'body air' for 'body hair.'

My final remarks constitute a plea. The Philippine government, through the Department of Education, must do as much as possible to preserve the heritage of its indigenous languages. It has already taken some magnificent first steps in supporting a "First Language Component (Bridging Program)" among the Tawali Ifugao and Lubuagan Kalinga.⁵ Such a program need not be, as so many administrators fear, a costly enterprise. Procedures and efforts along these lines are described in Hohulin (1993), Young (2001), and Dekker (2003). Own-language literacy in the primary school can be done with appropriate doses of programmed literacy and creative writing, whereby students generate their own in-class materials and share them with the classmates. This was done in Aboriginal communities in Australia with only modest costs borne by local schools. The need for and beauty of "OLE" or "own language education" (Zorc, 1985) is one way for the Central Tagbanwas to reverse a trend and illustrate to other peoples around the world that their children and their language each have a life ahead of them.

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⁵ Steve Quakenbush, personal communication, dated Mar 10, 2004.

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