

A Brief Guide to Comparing
Topping and Dungca's (1973) *Chamorro reference grammar* and
Chung's (2020) *Chamorro grammar*

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Although Topping and Dungca's (1973) *Chamorro reference grammar* and Chung's (2020) *Chamorro grammar* are both descriptions of the Chamorro language, they analyze the language differently. This brief guide is intended for readers familiar with Topping and Dungca's analysis who would like to compare it with Chung's analysis. Seven aspects of Topping and Dungca's analysis are covered, namely, vowel harmony, vowels and syllable structure, parts of speech, pronouns, classifiers, definite-indefinite objects, and the focus system. For each topic, Topping & Dungca's analysis is first discussed and then compared with Chung's analysis of the same material. An overview chart can be found at the end of the document.

A. Vowel harmony (Topping and Dungca's section 2.7.3, pp. 51-54)

Topping and Dungca (1973: 51) characterize vowel harmony as “one of the most interesting phonological features” of the Chamorro language. They identify two types of vowel harmony: *vowel fronting*, which changes a back vowel to the corresponding front vowel after certain particles containing a front vowel (e.g. *guma* ‘house’, *i gima* ‘the house’), and *vowel raising*, which changes a mid vowel to the corresponding high vowel before certain suffixes beginning with a vowel (e.g. their phonemic (underlying) forms /tuge’/ ‘write’, /tugi’i/ ‘write to’).

Chung refers to vowel fronting as *umlaut*. Otherwise, her analysis of this process is similar to Topping and Dungca's (see her section 30.2, pp. 681-685).

Chung's analysis does not include a process corresponding to Topping and Dungca's vowel raising. For her, the unstressed final vowels that Topping and Dungca analyze as mid are actually high. These vowels do not change—they remain high—once a suffix beginning with a vowel is attached. For instance, in Chung's analysis, the phonemic (underlying) form of ‘write’ is /tugi’/. Attaching the suffix *-i* to this form directly produces the form /tugi’i/, so no raising of a mid vowel to a high vowel is needed (see Chung's section 29.5.1, pp. 664-665).

B. Vowels and syllable structure (Topping and Dungca's section 2.7.4, pp. 54-57)

Topping and Dungca's description of vowels and syllable structure begins with two general observations (1973: 54). First, in indigenous words, “high...vowels occur in open syllables, while mid ...vowels occur in closed syllables.” Second, “if a word of two syllables has a mid vowel in the first syllable which is followed by two or more consonants, then the vowel of the second syllable will usually be mid.”

Chung's description of the distribution of mid and high vowels differs from Topping and Dungca's in that it also refers to stress (see her sections 29.5.1 and 29.5.2.2, pp. 664-665 and 668-669). She says (2020: 664), “mid vowels occur in closed syllables that bear primary stress,

and high vowels occur elsewhere (= in syllables that are open or unstressed).” Thus, for her, the underlying form of ‘write’ is /tugi’/, whereas for Topping and Dungca, it is /tuge’/.

In Chung’s analysis, a process of *gemination* is responsible for Topping and Dungca’s observation that if a mid vowel in the first syllable of a two-syllable word is followed by two or more consonants, then the vowel of the second syllable is usually mid (see her section 30.3, pp. 685-688).

C. Parts of speech (Topping and Dungca’s section 3.3, pp. 76-82)

Many Chamorro content words can serve more than one function. Observing this, Topping and Dungca reject the traditional classification of these words into nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Instead, they develop a Chamorro-specific system of word classification that recognizes three classes of content words (‘major words’), which they call *Class I*, *Class II*, and *Class III*. They characterize these word classes as follows. Class I words “must be able to take the passive voice prefix *ma-*” and “must be able to form the predicate of a goal focus construction” (1973: 78). Class II words “can form the predicate of a sentence with the pronoun *yo*’ as the subject pronoun” (1973: 78). Class III words consist of a small number of words that “have the characteristics of verbs except that they do not take the full set of verb affixation” (1973: 80).

In contrast, Chung adopts the traditional classification of content words for Chamorro (see her Chapter 27, pp. 599-618). Her discussion provides one of the few places in the *Chamorro grammar* where her approach and Topping and Dungca’s approach are explicitly compared. She attributes the fact that many Chamorro content words can serve more than one function to the morphological process of *conversion* (see Chung’s section 27.4, pp. 609-618).

D. Pronouns (Topping and Dungca’s section 3.4.1, pp. 106-111)

Topping and Dungca recognize four types of Chamorro pronouns, which they call *hu-type*, *yo’-type*, *possessive*, and *emphatic*. In their analysis, *hu-type* pronouns “function as subject markers and always precede the verb” (1973: 106). *Yo’-type* pronouns “function as both subject and object pronouns, and in both cases they always follow the verb” (1973: 107). Possessive pronouns, which indicate possession, are suffixes—they “must always be attached to the preceding word” (1973: 108). Finally, emphatic pronouns “usually function as subject pronouns and are used in situations where the subject is emphasized” (1973: 110).

Unlike Topping and Dungca, Chung recognizes just three types of pronouns: *weak pronouns*, *independent pronouns*, and *null pronouns*. Her weak pronouns correspond to Topping and Dungca’s *yo’-type* pronouns (see her section 8.3, pp. 177-182); they are “unstressed morphemes that lean on phonological material to their left” (2020: 177). Chung’s *independent pronouns* correspond to Topping and Dungca’s emphatic pronouns (see her section 8.2, pp. 173-177). These pronouns “are phonological words, and have the same word order flexibility as other noun phrases” (2020: 173-174). Chung recognizes a third type of pronoun, *null pronouns*, which are unpronounced (see her section 8.4, pp. 182-187). For her, the subject of the sentence *Kumâti* ‘S/he cried’ is a null pronoun with the meaning ‘s/he’.

In Chung’s analysis, Topping and Dungca’s *hu-type* pronouns and possessive pronouns are not pronouns, but rather types of agreement. She treats their *hu-type* pronouns as morphemes that indicate a transitive verb’s agreement with its subject (see Chung’s section 2.2.2.1, pp. 20-22). Similarly, she treats their possessive pronouns as suffixes that indicate a noun’s agreement

with its possessor (see Chung's section 7.1.1, pp. 141-145). In the sentence *Ha taitai i lepblu* 'S/he read the book', for example, Topping and Dungca would analyze *ha* as a *hu*-type pronoun ('s/he'), but Chung would analyze *ha* as 3 sg. subject agreement, and the subject as a null pronoun with the meaning 's/he' (see her sections 8.4.2 and 8.4.3, pp. 185-189).

E. Classifiers (Topping and Dungca's section 3.5.0, pp. 164-166; see also pp. 223-224)

In Topping and Dungca's analysis, Chamorro has four *classifiers* that "are used in possessive constructions only" (1973: 164). These classifiers are *na*, which marks edible things, *ga*, which marks non-human animals, *iyo*, which marks inanimate objects, and *gimen*, which marks drinkable things.

Chung analyzes these forms not as classifiers, but rather as *dependent nouns* which "must either be possessed or else incorporated into a verb of possession" (2020: 148). For her, the dependent nouns are *na* - 'food', *ga* - 'pet', and *iyu* - 'possession' (see her section 7.1.3, pp. 148-151). The main difference lies in part of speech. For Topping and Dungca, these forms are inflectional morphemes (their 'minor words'), whereas for Chung, they are content words ('nouns').

F. Definite-indefinite objects (Topping and Dungca's section 4.9, pp. 239-242)

In Topping and Dungca's analysis, Chamorro employs two forms for sentences that "may be considered transitive" (1973: 240). When the object is definite, the verb occurs in its base form and the subject is marked with a *hu*-type pronoun. An example of this *definite object form* is their sentence *Hu li'e' i lepblo* 'I saw the book'. When the object is indefinite, the prefix *man-* is attached to the verb and there is no *hu*-type pronoun; instead, the subject (when a pronoun) is indicated by a *yo*'-type pronoun. An example of this *indefinite object form* is their sentence *Manli'e' yo' lepblo* 'I saw a book'.

Chung treats these two sentence types as differing in transitivity. For her, Topping and Dungca's definite object form is *transitive* – it has a direct object (see e.g. her section 3.2.2, pp. 48-49) – but their indefinite object form is *intransitive* – the noun phrase corresponding to the transitive direct object is either implicit or else realized as an oblique. Chung refers to this type of intransitive sentence as *antipassive* (see her section 10.3, pp. 225-234). Her view of the relation between transitive and antipassive sentences, on the one hand, and definiteness, on the other, differs from Topping and Dungca's. Unlike them, she maintains that the antipassive can also be used with an oblique that is definite (i.e. a definite noun phrase corresponding to the transitive object; see her p. 229). She also observes that the transitive sentence type can be used with an object that is indefinite, "although this is considerably less common" (see her p. 234).

G. The focus system (Topping and Dungca's section 4.10, pp. 243-254)

Topping and Dungca (1973: 243) identify the *focus system* as "a very important feature" of the Chamorro language. According to them, this system consists of five constructions which speakers employ to indicate which noun phrase in the sentence "is the 'theme' of the utterance, or what, in [their] own conceptual framework, is at the heart of the utterance." These constructions are *actor focus*, *goal focus*, *causative focus*, *referential focus*, and *benefactive focus*. Actor focus is used "when the focus (or emphasis) is on the actor", as in *Guahu lumi'e' i*

palao'an 'I am the one who saw the woman' (1973: 243). Goal focus, which is formed with the infix *-in-*, is used "when the focus (or emphasis) is on the goal", which "is usually the direct object"; an example is *Lini'e' i palao'an ni lahi* 'The man saw the woman' (1973: 245). Causative focus, which involves the causative prefix *na'*, is used "when the focus is on the thing that is caused to do or become something" (1973: 247); an example is *Hu na' gasgas i kareta* 'I caused the car to be clean'. Referential focus, which involves the suffixes *-i*, *-yi*, and *-gui*, "has a fairly wide range of meanings" (1973: 249); among the examples cited are *Hu kuentusi hao* 'I talked to you' and *Hu fa'tinasi hao kafe* 'I made some coffee for you'. Finally, benefactive focus, which involves the suffix *-iyi*, is used "when there is a benefactor—something or someone for whom something is done" (1973: 251), as in *Hu kuentusiyi si Pedro* 'I talked for Pedro'. Topping and Dungca (1973: 253-254) note that *multiple focus constructions* are possible, meaning that a verb can exhibit more than one focus affix. In other words, it is possible to combine actor focus and causative focus, goal focus and referential focus, and so on.

For Chung, Topping and Dungca's focus system is not a unitary system. Instead, there are simply five different sentence types, each with its own form and function. Topping and Dungca's actor focus corresponds to the construction that Chung analyzes as *syntactic focus* when the focused constituent is the subject of a transitive or antipassive sentence (see her sections 23.3 and 23.4, pp. 517-524). The other four constructions, in her view, do not involve focus or emphasis. Goal focus corresponds to the construction she analyzes as one type of *passive* (see her section 10.2, pp. 212-225). Causative focus corresponds to the complex sentence type she analyzes as *causative* (see her Chapter 12, pp. 261-293). Referential focus and benefactive focus correspond to constructions that she analyzes as *applicative* (see her Chapter 11, pp. 235-260). In her analysis, Topping and Dungca's multiple focus constructions are constructions in which one of these sentence types is derived from another. For instance, their combination of actor focus and causative focus is a causative sentence in which the causer is syntactically focused; their combination of goal focus and referential focus is an applicative sentence that has been passivized; and so on.

H. Concluding note

These analytic differences might seem so great that readers might wonder whether Topping and Dungca's *Chamorro reference grammar* and Chung's *Chamorro grammar* are describing the same language. The answer to this question is clearly yes. Topping's research on Chamorro was done from the late 1950's to the early 1970's and seems to have mainly involved speakers from Rota and Guam, whereas Chung's research on Chamorro was done later (from the late 1970's to 2018) and mainly involved speakers from Saipan and Guam. Nonetheless, there are only minor differences in the language material they describe. A more likely source of the differences is the theoretical frameworks in which their analyses were developed: Topping was trained in American structural linguistics, whereas Chung was trained in generative (Chomskyan) linguistics.

References

Chung, Sandra. 2020. *Chamorro grammar*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.48330/E2159R> Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2sx7w4h5>

Topping, Donald M., with the assistance of Bernadita C. Dungca. 1973. *Chamorro reference grammar*. University of Hawaii Press.

Summary Chart of Equivalencies (created by David Ruskin)

Topping & Dungca (1973)		Chung (2020)	
<u>T&D Analysis</u>	<u>Subtypes</u>	<u>Chung Analysis</u>	<u>Locations</u>
Vowel Harmony § 2.7.3, pp. 51-54	Vowel Fronting	Umlaut	§ 30.2, pp. 681-685
	Vowel Raising	(Analyzed as lexical)	§ 29.5.1, pp. 664-665
Mid Vowels § 2.7.4, pp. 54-57	In Open & Closed Syllables	In stressed closed syllables	§ 29.5.1, pp. 664-665 § 29.5.2.2, pp. 668-669
	After 2 or more consonants	With gemination	§ 30.3, pp. 685-688
Parts of Speech § 3.3, pp. 76-82	Class I, II, III words	Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, etc.	Chapter 27, including § 27.4, pp. 609-618
Pronouns § 3.4.1, pp. 106-111	<i>hu</i> -type	Agreement	§ 2.2.2.1, pp. 20-22
	<i>yo'</i> -type	Weak pronouns	§ 8.3, pp. 177-182
	Possessive	Possessive agreement	§ 7.1.1, pp. 141-145
	Emphatic	Independent pronouns	§ 8.2, pp. 173-177
	(no equivalent)	Null pronouns	§ 8.4, pp. 182-187
Classifiers § 3.5.0, pp. 164-166 § 4.4, pp. 223-224	Classifiers in possessive constructions	Dependent nouns	§ 7.1.3, pp. 148-151
Definite-indefinite objects § 4.9, pp. 239-242	Definite & Indefinite objects & plurals	Transitive constructions	§ 3.2.2, pp. 48-49
		Antipassive constructions	§ 10.3, pp. 225-234
Focus System § 4.10, pp. 243-254	Actor Focus	Syntactic focus	§ 23.3 - 23.4, pp. 517-524
	Goal Focus	A type of passive construction	§ 10.2, pp. 212-225
	Causative Focus	Causative constructions	Ch. 12, pp. 261-293
	Referential Focus	Applicative constructions	Ch. 11, pp. 235-260
	Benefactive Focus	constructions	