Two Chamorro Orthographies
and their differences

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An Ideal Orthography

• Systematic
• Accurate
  – true to the structure of the language
• Easy to learn
• Connected to earlier ways of spelling the language
  – some legacy features are preserved
What’s Special about Chamorro

• Language loss
  – more recent in the CNMI than in Guam

• Ethnically and linguistically diverse classrooms

• The easier it is for children to learn Chamorro spelling, the better the chances that the language will survive
Two Principles of Orthography

- Two principles involved in designing a good orthography
  - “One sound, one symbol”
  - “One word, one spelling”
“One sound, one symbol”

• This principle means: spell a given sound the same way everywhere
  – The sound /k/ is spelled the same way wherever it occurs, not k sometimes and g other times
    kulu, dikiki’, måolik
  – Glottal stop is spelled the same way wherever it occurs
    li’i’, palåo’an, sa’
Ex. of “One sound, one symbol”

• Languages whose orthographies obey “one sound, one symbol”
  – Hawaiian
  – Spanish (mostly)
  – Turkish
  ... But not English
“One word, one spelling”

• This principle means: spell a given word the same way in all its different forms
  – The word *electric* is spelled the same way in all of its forms and in all the words derived from it

    *electric*, *electricity*, *electrician*

    /k/       /s/       /š/
Ex. of “One word, one spelling”

- Languages whose orthographies obey “one word, one spelling”
  - Hawaiian
  - English
  - Chinese
Spelling and Real Languages

• Some languages, like Hawaiian, have an orthography that obeys both principles.
• The sound structure of other languages makes it impossible for their orthography to obey both principles at the same time:
  – English
  – Chamorro
  – and many other languages.
Two Ways of Coping

• Choose one principle and stick with it
• Pick & choose among the principles, using each in different contexts
Two Chamorro Orthographies

- **CNMI**: “one sound, one symbol” throughout
- **Guam**: “one sound, one symbol” in some contexts and “one word, one spelling” in other contexts
The Result

• The CNMI orthography sometimes doesn’t obey “one word, one spelling”, but it is transparent, accurate, and easy to read and write.

• The Guam orthography sometimes doesn’t obey “one sound, one symbol”, other times doesn’t obey “one word, one spelling”, and has a more complicated set of spelling rules.
Shared History

• Both the CNMI spelling and the Guam spelling are descended from the standard orthography developed by the Marianas Orthography Committee in 1971
Shared Letters

• The **CNMI** spelling and the **Guam** spelling use the same letters of the alphabet

• The letters **ch** and **ng** are digraphs
  – Diagraph: a 2-letter combination that represents 1 sound

• The letters **â** and **ñ** have diacritics
  – Diacritic: a mark on a letter that represents a difference in sound

• The letter **y** corresponds to the sound /dz/
  – This is a legacy feature from older Chamorro spelling systems

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Summary of the Differences

More important

• How the mid and high vowels are spelled
• How the geminate consonants are spelled
• How the diphthong /aw/ is spelled
• How digraphs are capitalized

Less important
Difference 1: Mid and High Vowels

• Chamorro has six vowel sounds
  – Two high vowels, /i/ and /u/
  – Two mid vowels, /e/ and /o/
  – Two low vowels
Letters for Vowels

• Here are the letters that represent them
  – Two high vowels:  i    u
  – Two mid vowels:  e    o
  – Two low vowels:  a    å
Sidebar: Low Vowels

• In both the **CNMI** orthography and the **Guam** orthography, the spelling of the low vowels as *a* and *å* obeys the principle “one sound, one symbol”

  ‘bad’  \( \text{båba} \)

  ‘open’  \( \text{baba} \)
Sidebar: Low Vowels

• This sometimes means that words spelled with a and å do not obey the principle “one word, one spelling”

‘spouse’  
asagua
‘my spouse’  
asaguå-hu
‘mother’  
nåna
‘my mother’  
nanå-hu
Mid and High Vowels

• In the CNMI orthography, the spelling of the mid and high vowels as \textit{e, o, i, u} also obeys “one sound, one symbol”– but not “one word, one spelling”
  – So, this orthography has a uniform system of spelling for vowels (and, more generally, for sounds)
## CNMI Spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tlingit</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tlingit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘group’</td>
<td>gurupu</td>
<td>‘group’</td>
<td>gurupu-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘knife’</td>
<td>se’si’</td>
<td>‘knife’</td>
<td>si’se’-mu</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘knowledge’</td>
<td>tiningu’</td>
<td>‘knowledge’</td>
<td>tiningo’-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘do’</td>
<td>cho’gui</td>
<td>‘do’</td>
<td>cho’guem-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘big’</td>
<td>dångkulu</td>
<td>‘big’</td>
<td>dangkulon-ña</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*or*

<table>
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<td>‘big’</td>
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Mid and High Vowels

• In the Guam orthography, the spelling of the mid and high vowels as e, o, i, u obeys “one word, one spelling” -- but not “one sound, one symbol”

  – So, this orthography treats the spelling of low vowels differently from the spelling of the other vowels
Guam Spelling

<table>
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# The Two Spellings Compared

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24 March 2019

24
How the Guam Spelling Works

• In the Guam orthography, if a word is pronounced with the sounds /e/ or /o/ in any of its forms, then the word is always spelled with the letters e or o
# Guam & CNMI Compared Again

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guam</th>
<th>CNMI</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gurupu</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>dångkolo</td>
<td>dångkulu</td>
<td>dangkulon-ña or</td>
</tr>
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</table>

or dangkulon-ña

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One Outcome

• Syllables that sound the same, and are spelled the same in the CNMI orthography, are sometimes spelled differently from each other in the Guam orthography

<table>
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<tr>
<th>‘sibling’</th>
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<th>Guam</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che’lu</td>
<td>che’lu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘put’</td>
<td>po’lu</td>
<td>po’lo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pushing the Generalization

- In indigenous Chamorro words, the vowels that are sometimes pronounced e or o, and other times i or u, occur in syllables that either (i) end in a consonant, or (ii) follow a syllable that ends in a consonant.
Pushing the Generalization

• In the Guam orthography, the spelling rules require vowels in these positions to be spelled with e or o, even if they are never pronounced /e/ or /o/ in any of their forms.

‘from’ ginen
‘you (pl.)’ hamyo
Difference 2: Geminates

- Geminate (long or doubled) consonants occur in the Guam and Saipan dialects and are recognized in both orthographies.
- Geminate consonants are spelled by doubling the consonant, except that geminate /ts/ is spelled tch, geminate /dz/ is spelled ty, and geminate /ñ/ is spelled nñ.
Difference 2: Geminates

- In the **Guam** orthography, geminate consonants formed from /f, s, ts, dz/ are sometimes spelled with single consonants.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>‘touch’</td>
<td>patcha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘that’</td>
<td>atyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘together’</td>
<td>danña’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Difference 2: Geminates

• The consonants of the possessive suffixes -\textit{hu}, -\textit{mu}, -\textit{ña}, -\textit{ta} are geminated under certain conditions. This gemination is spelled with double consonants in the \textbf{CNMI} orthography but not the \textbf{Guam} orthography.

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<tr>
<td>‘your door’</td>
<td>i pettåm-mu</td>
<td>i pettå-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘your time’</td>
<td>tiempom-mu</td>
<td>tiempo-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘your letter’</td>
<td>kattåm-mu</td>
<td>kattå-mu</td>
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</table>
Difference 3: Diphthongs

• The diphthongs /aj/ and /aw/ both begin with a low vowel, which is front in /aj/ and back in /aw/

• Diphthongs can be treated as complex vowels or combos of a vowel plus a glide

• The **CNMI** spelling treats diphthongs as complex vowels; the **Guam** spelling treats them as vowel-glide combinations
Difference 3: Diphthongs

• The CNMI orthography spells /aw/ as åo except when vowel fronting occurs.
• The Guam orthography spells /aw/ as åo when it is stressed and there is no vowel fronting, and as ao otherwise.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>‘go’</td>
<td>hånåo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘person’</td>
<td>tåotåo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘the person’</td>
<td>i taotåo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Difference 4: Capitalization

• Digraphs are two-letter combinations that represent single sounds
• Chamorro has two digraphs, \textit{ch} and \textit{ng}
Difference 4: Capitalization

- In languages with Roman orthographies, the first letter of a sentence or a name is capitalized (made bigger) by convention.
- In almost all these languages, capitalization affects the first letter of a digraph but not the second, e.g. *This page...*, *Christmas*, *Shell Oil*.
- Almost no language capitalizes all digraphs at the beginning of a sentence.
Difference 4: Capitalization

- The **CNMI** orthography capitalizes the first letter of a digraph but not the second; the **2017 Guam** orthography capitalizes *both* letters.

<table>
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<td>‘Chamorro’</td>
<td>Chamorro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘bring’</td>
<td>Chuli’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘when?’</td>
<td>Ngai’an</td>
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Difference 4: Capitalization

• Although the Guam spelling convention is supposed to affect all digraphs at the beginning of a sentence or name, it is not clear whether in practice it affects the spelling of any word except the important word CHamoru.
Which Orthography is Which?

• O sino manaplika hâo para un facho’chu’. Un tungu’ ha’ na guaha bakânti para atyu na cho’chu’... Matågu’ hâo para un tugi’ påpa’ i kapasidåt-mu na klasin cho’chu’

• O sino manaplika hao para un facho’cho’. Un tungo’ ha’ na guaha bakånte para ayu na cho’cho’... Matågo’ hao para un tuge’ påpa' i kapasidåt-mu na klasen cho’cho’
Si Yu’us Ma’åsi’!

Or, in a different orthography,
Si Yu’os Ma’åse’!