

# Two Chamorro Orthographies *and their differences*

Sandy Chung

University of California, Santa Cruz

[schung@ucsc.edu](mailto:schung@ucsc.edu)

# 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', maolik
  - Glottal stop is spelled the same way wherever it occurs
    - li'i', palao'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

**electricu, 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
  - Digraph: a 2-letter combination that represents 1 sound
- The letters **å** 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

# 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 **ã** obeys the principle “one sound, one symbol”

‘bad’                      **bãba**

‘open’                     **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 **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

'group'

**gurupu**

**gurupu-mu**

'knife'

**se'si'**

**si'se'-mu**

'knowledge'

**tingu'**

**tingo'-mu**

'do'

**cho'gui**

**cho'guem-mu**

'big'

**dangkulu**

**dangkulon-ña**

*or*

**dangkulon-ña**

# 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

'group'	<b>gurupu</b>	<b>gurupu-mu</b>
'knife'	<b>se'se'</b>	<b>se'se'-mu</b>
'knowledge'	<b>tingo'</b>	<b>tingo'-mu</b>
'do'	<b>cho'gue</b>	<b>cho'gue-mu</b>
'big'	<b>dangkolo</b>	<b>dangkolo-ña</b>

# The Two Spellings Compared

CNMI

Guam

'group'

**gurupu**

**gurupu**

'knife'

**se'si'**

**se'se'**

'knowledge'

**tingu'**

**tingo'**

'do'

**cho'gui**

**cho'gue**

'big'

**dangkulu**

**dangkolo**



# 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

Guam

**gurupu**

**se'se'**

**tingo'**

**cho'gue**

**dangkolo**

CNMI

**gurupu**

**se'si'**

**tingu'**

**cho'gui**

**dangkulu**

CNMI

**gurupu-mu**

**si'se'-mu**

**tingo'-mu**

**cho'guem-mu**

**dangkulon-ña**

*or*

**dangkulon-ña**

# 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

	CNMI	Guam
'sibling'	<b>che'<u>lu</u></b>	<b>che'<u>lu</u></b>
'put'	<b>po'<u>lu</u></b>	<b>po'<u>lo</u></b>

# 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

	CNMI	Guam
'touch'	<b>patcha</b>	<b>pacha</b>
'that'	<b>atyu</b>	<b>ayu</b>
'together'	<b>danña'</b>	<b>daña'</b>

# Difference 2: Geminates

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

	CNMI	Guam
'your door'	<b>i pettåm-mu</b>	<b>i pettå-mu</b>
'your time'	<b>tiempom-mu</b>	<b>tiempo-mu</b>
'your letter'	<b>kattåm-mu</b>	<b>kattå-mu</b>



# 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 **âo** except when vowel fronting occurs
- The **Guam** orthography spells /aw/ as **âo** when it is stressed and there is no vowel fronting, and as **ao** otherwise

	CNMI	Guam
'go'	<b>hânao</b>	<b>hânao</b>
'person'	<b>tâotâo</b>	<b>tâotao</b>
'the person'	<b>i taotâo</b>	<b>i taotao</b>

# Difference 4: Capitalization

- Digraphs are two-letter combinations that represent single sounds
- Chamorro has two digraphs, **ch** and **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

	CNMI	Guam
'Chamorro'	<b>Chamorro</b>	<b>CHamoru</b>
'bring'	<b>Chuli'</b>	<b>CHuli'</b>
'when?'	<b>Ngai'an</b>	<b>NGai'an</b>

# 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 hão para un facho'chu'. Un tungu' ha' na guaha bakânti para atyu na cho'chu'... Matãgu' hão para un tugi' pãpa' i kapasidât-mu na klasin cho'chu'
- O sino manaplika hao para un facho'cho'. Un tungo' ha' na guaha bakãnte para ayu na cho'cho'... Matãgo' hao para un tuge' pãpa' i kapasidât-mu na klasen cho'cho'

Si Yu'us Ma'åsi'!

Or, in a different orthography,

Si Yu'os Ma'åse'!