

## **Documenting online writing practices: The case of nominal plural marking in Zamboanga Chabacano**

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### **Abstract**

The emergence of computer-mediated communication has brought about new opportunities for both speakers and researchers of minority or under-described languages. This paper shows how the analysis of spontaneous contemporary language samples from online social networks can make a contribution to the documentation and description of languages like Chabacano, a Spanish-derived creole spoken in the Philippines. More specifically, we focus on nominal plural marking in the Zamboangueño variety, a still imperfectly understood feature, by examining a corpus composed of texts from online sources. The attested combination of innovative and vestigial features requires a close look at the high contact environment, different levels of metalinguistic awareness or even some language ideologies. The findings shed light on the wide variety of plural formation strategies which resulted from the contact of Spanish with Philippine languages. Possible triggers, such as animacy, definiteness or specificity, are also examined and some future research areas suggested.

**Keywords:** nominal plural marking, Zamboangueño Chabacano, number, creole languages

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Zamboanga Chabacano (also known as Zamboangueno or Chavacano) is one of the three extant varieties of Philippine Creole Spanish or Chabacano and totals around 500,000 speakers in and around Zamboanga City in the Southern Philippines. The other two varieties, Cavite Chabacano and Ternate Chabacano, are spoken in the Manila Bay area by 3,000 and as many as 7,000 people respectively (Lesho & Sippola 2013). Zamboangueno developed probably as late as the XIX century (cf. Fernández 2015) as a result of the prolonged contact of Spanish with Philippine languages throughout more than three centuries of Spanish rule.<sup>2</sup> The glottonym Chabacano derives from a Spanish word meaning ‘uncouth’ or ‘vulgar’, which gives a clear indication of the prevailing attitudes at the time of the creole emergence.

According to Lesho & Sippola (2013), since independence in 1946 both Cavite Chabacano and Ternate Chabacano have lost vitality in terms of number of speakers and domains of use; however, the latter seems to be less endangered thanks to stronger intergenerational transmission. The case of Zamboanga Chabacano is very different not only quantitatively, but also as regards its presence in important domains such as education and the media. Nonetheless, some ongoing changes may alter this apparently safe sociolinguistic situation.

Zamboanga City has long been a multilingual society where Zamboangueno has held a dominant position, but the region is also home to speakers of Tagalog, Cebuano, Tausug, Yakan and Sama, among other languages. However, over recent decades, the constant influx of speakers of Tagalog and Visayan languages, brought about by sustained economic growth in the city, has altered this already complex language ecology. Most importantly, the creole language cannot compete with the prestige of English and Filipino in formal domains.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, while the number of Spanish speakers is all but irrelevant, the prestige of this language remains intact for many language activists and language planners. All in all, the proportion of Chabacano-speakers is decreasing and, although not critically, so is intergenerational transmission (Tobar 2016). This state of affairs has been described as “stable but threatened” by Fortuno-Genuino (2011) in her work on domains of language use.

The growing perception of language endangerment among many Zamboanguenos is one of the main reasons for the recent launching of some private and institutional initiatives. These include the creation of the *Consejo de Investigacion*

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge the help provided by Jerome Herrera, a native Zamboangueno speaker and enthusiastic language activist to whom I will refer as ‘my informant’.

<sup>2</sup> The Philippines gained independence from Spain in 1898 only to remain under American rule until 1946. While Spanish was never widely spoken in the archipelago, the Americans soon extended the use of English to Education and other formal domains.

<sup>3</sup> Filipino is based on Tagalog and is mandated as the co-official language along with English. Many non-Tagalog speakers refer to Filipino as Tagalog, sometimes as a way of denouncing its growing influence.

*y Desarrollo del Lenguaje Chabacano* ‘Council for Chabacano Language Research and Development’, the introduction of the *Día de Fundación de Chabacano* ‘Chabacano Foundation Day’, and the organization of the *Chavacano Orthography Congress* and the *Segunda Conferencia Nacional del Lenguaje Chabacano* ‘Second National Chabacano Language Conference’. Apart from that, many Zamboanguenos have resorted to social media networks as a way not only to use and preserve their language but also to promote it. Crucially, these online resources provide an unprecedented amount of, for the most part, spontaneous linguistic data otherwise unavailable for this poorly documented and described language. For details and caveats in the corpus used and its representativeness, see §3 below. Although by no means unprecedented (cf. Tobar 2016), the type of data used in this study is still uncommon in the field of language documentation and description, which may give rise to concerns about its suitability. In this respect, we strongly believe that online language samples equate “raw” data “based on observable linguistic behavior” (Himmelmann 2012). These data become “primary” when prepared for “further analysis (documentation)” and “structural” when they serve as “input for analytical generalizations (description)” (Himmelmann 2012: 199).

The lexicon of creole languages typically comes from a colonial language, which is referred to as the LEXIFIER or the SUPERSTRATE. In the case of Zamboangueno, around 80% of its vocabulary is of Spanish origin. In contrast, creole morphosyntax tends to be based on, or at least heavily influenced by, that of the languages which are either still spoken in the same area as the creole (ADSTRATES), or no longer so (SUBSTRATES). Thus, the grammar structures of Chabacano derive to a great extent from Philippine languages like Cebuano, Hiligaynon and Tagalog.

As far as nominal plural marking is concerned, most available descriptions of Zamboanga Chabacano state that it is carried out primarily by means of preposing the Philippine particle *mga* /ma'ŋa/: “*mga* is by far the most common marker of plurality” (Forman 1972: 112). There is less consensus on the use of other strategies such as suffixation on nominal stems, a vestigial feature of Spanish origin which, to date, hasn't been duly researched. In fact, according to Forman (1972: 113): “Further study of this phenomenon is indicated; we would like to know the full range of nouns so occurring, as well as what sociological correlates if any are associated”. Multiple marking, reduplications or the associative plural are occasionally listed as additional pluralizing strategies. Understanding these features requires factoring in this highly multilingual context from a diachronic perspective, together with the growing pressure of Philippine languages which leads to a shrinking Spanish component.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is twofold: to examine and classify variation in nominal plural marking and to offer an example of how social media networks are providing new opportunities for researchers of endangered or lesser-described languages.

## 2. Nominal plural marking in creole languages

The view of creoles as being grammatically less complex than older languages (McWhorter 2001) has been contested by authors like DeGraff (2001) or Farquahson (2007), who claim that creoles do contain more morphology than has been generally acknowledged. Table 1 presents the values from the *Atlas and Survey of Pidgin & Creole Languages* (APiCS, Michaelis et al. 2013) for the *Expression of nominal plural meaning* and demonstrates that these languages resort not only to analytical processes, such as free morphemes, but also to synthetic ones like affixation.

**Table 1.** Nominal plural expression strategies in 76 creole languages

Feature	Exclusive	Shared	Example
Plural is not expressed overtly	7	0	Korlai
Plural prefix	4	1	Louisiana Creole
Plural suffix	8	24	Cape Verdean
Plural stem change	0	12	Haitian Creole
Plural tone or stress change	0	1	Kinubi
Plural reduplication	4	14	Papia Kristang
Plural word preceding the noun	16	11	Zamboanga Chabacano
Plural word following the noun	4	17	Papiamentu

The data from Table 1 show that the use of a plural suffix is actually the one feature present in the largest number of creoles: thirty-two. However, plural words, either preceding or following nouns, are the exclusive way of marking nominal plurality in twenty cases and occur in a total of forty-eight. Velupillai (2015: 357) compares fifty-three creoles from APiCS with 1,065 non-creoles from the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (WALS, Haspelmath et al. 2005) and concludes that “the absolute majority of the languages in the creole sample express plurality with a free form (analytically) while the absolute majority of the languages in the WALS sample express plurality through affixation.”

Perhaps a preliminary consideration is that of optionality, since in most creoles bare nouns can have a plural interpretation (Baptista 2007: 467). In fact, plurality may have to be inferred from the context (Bruyn 1994: 259). The APiCS data show that out of a total of seventy-six creoles, only sixteen require invariant plural marking, which, under different conditions, is optional in fifty-five or even never marked in five cases. In contrast, Velupillai (2015) shows that only one fifth of non-creoles have the option of not marking plurals. Animacy and definiteness are often mentioned as two of the factors which may favor some kind of morphosyntactic marking (Baptista 2003).

Plural words are the dominant strategy in the three Spanish-lexified creoles: Palenquero *ma* (Schwegler 2007) and Chabacano *mga* precede nouns, whereas Papiamentu *nan* (Kouwenberg 2003) follows them. All three markers come from substrate languages: *ma* and *nan* from African languages, and *mga* from Philippine

languages. However, while *ma* and *mga* are just plural words, *nan* is both a nominal plural marker and a third person plural pronoun, a common strategy among Atlantic creoles (Holm 2000). At any rate, the literature on nominal plural marking in creole languages reveals the existence of a wide variety of strategies which cannot be overlooked.

Although the use of inflection is often characterized as fossilized, non-productive or limited to acrolectal varieties, plural suffixation is in fact common in a good number of creoles and is guided by properties such as animacy, definiteness or verb tense (Baptista 2003: 330). Bruyn (1994: 260) points to reduplication as an expected plural marking strategy since it is “an iconic representation of the numbers it refers to”, but states that it doesn’t seem to occur very frequently, and when it does it tends to have specialized meanings, such as abundantive or distributive plurals. A related feature is the associative plural, which can be interpreted as “X and the people associated with her or him” and is common in some creole languages (Holm 2000: 215). Moreover, in a good number of creoles, including Zamboangueño, nominal plurality can be marked with more than one of the above-mentioned features, as Table 1 shows.

In summary, analytical strategies seem to be the most frequent ones, but there is a great deal of both internal and cross-linguistic variation concerning nominal plural marking in creole languages. This article offers an example of how multifaceted this feature may be in a creole language.

### 3. Methods

The corpus contains 1,137,963 tokens which come from the interaction carried out on two online social groups: *Zamboanga de Antes* ‘Old Zamboanga’ (ZdA), and *Serioso y Pendehadas* ‘Serious and nonsense’ (SyP). ZdA consists of 29,388 members as of March 2018 and is led by non-professional language activists. The data can be thought of as naturally occurring language, although there are some considerations which will be dealt with later. The ZdA section comprises the interactions carried out between September 2012 and September 2013 by 2,137 active group members: a total of 639,843 tokens and 41,712 types.<sup>4</sup> *Serioso y Pendehadas* was an internet forum whose interaction was first examined by Mauro Fernández in 2001. This subset consists of 498,120 tokens and 33,062 types. In both cases there is a surprisingly high type-token ratio which is due to non-standardized spellings and typographical errors. There is limited sociodemographic information available in the case of ZdA. Men represent 55% of authors but contribute 66% of posts with an average number of thirty-three words, compared to twenty-one in the case of women. The members of this group live mainly in Zamboanga City, but there are participants from all over the Philippines and the rest

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<sup>4</sup> Tobar (2016) offers a thorough review of technical and ethical issues related to this kind of corpus.

of the world. The leaders are in their 50s or 60s; younger members tend to be less active. There is no similar information available for the members of SyP. In all cases, members are mostly multilingual and usually include Cebuano, Tagalog or English, among other languages, in their repertoires.

Both ZdA and SyP offer Zamboangueño speakers from all over the world unprecedented opportunities to interact in a relaxed way. However, while the main ambition of SyP members, as suggested by its name, is to socialize in an often playful way, the description section of ZdA states that this group aims at revitalizing and preserving Zamboangueño language and culture, therefore introducing an element of metalinguistic awareness which must be factored in as far as representativeness is concerned. These groups thus differ in the nature of their discussions and consequently, at least to some extent, in their language usage. The interaction in SyP can be seen as more spontaneous and includes abundant code-switching to English and, to a lesser extent, Tagalog. In contrast, as a result of the promotion of nostalgic, sometimes purist, attitudes, ZdA may show a bias in favor of acrolectal or hispanized features (cf. Tobar 2016). This is the case of the leaders, who are also the most active members of the group, and of some other participants who may sporadically try to accommodate their usage to the former.

We describe eight pluralizing strategies together with an account of their treatment in the literature. The comparisons between SyP and ZdA, and between these and previous language descriptions, offer relevant information concerning contemporary selection and variation of nominal plurality marking strategies. All examples are our own unless otherwise specified. The data have been analyzed with AntConc, a free tool for corpus linguistics research.<sup>5</sup> This technique allows for a rare but needed quantitative approach to variation in this creole language.

## 4. Nominal plural marking in Zamboanga Chabacano

### 4.1. Plural marker

Preposing the semantically empty marker *mga* /ma'ŋa/, common to several Philippine languages such as Tagalog, Cebuano and Hiligaynon, is the dominant strategy to indicate nominal plurality.

- (1) *el*        *mga*    *bata*  
       DEF     PL     child  
       'the children'

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony, Laurence. 2017. AntConc (Version 3.5.2) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software>.

Corbett (2000: 133) alludes to *mga* as an example of how languages like Tagalog can express plurality with a number word and goes on to say that it could be better described as a clitic. Perhaps this is one of those elements which, according to Bakker & Daval-Markussen (2017: 84) “can be analyzed as clitics or bound morphemes rather than particles, auxiliaries or pronouns.” In any case, Corbett (2000) stresses that *mga* is a pure number word equivalent to plural and not a mere quantifier. Schachter & Otnes (1972: 111) maintain that in Tagalog *mga* is a proclitic since it doesn’t occur phrase finally, that is, it always needs a host to its right. In the literature there is a good number of denominations for this marker: “pluralizer particle” or “plural morpheme” (Forman 1972), “morpheme” (Quilis & Casado-Fresnillo 2008), “particle” (Santos 2010; Steinkrüger 2013), “plural marker” (Lipski & Santoro 2007), “marker” (Miravite et al. 2009), “overt pluralizer” or “preposed particle” (Riego de Dios 1989). Hereafter *mga* and its variants will be referred to as plural markers, since establishing a definitive classification for this form is beyond the scope of this paper.

The other two allomorphs of the plural marker are *maga* [ma'ga] and *mana* [ma'na],<sup>6</sup> which according to Forman (1972), in what is to date the most complete description available, would have originated in the difficulty Spaniards had in pronouncing /ŋ/. Forman maintains that the three forms can occur with nouns of any lexical origin and their distribution is explained as follows:

If the three pluralizer particle forms are not in free variation, they may contrast along the following dimension: *maga* carries a Filipino, perhaps lower status, connotation; *mana* carries a Spanish connotation (as Spaniards evidently had difficulty pronouncing /ŋ/); *mana* carries younger Filipino, and in contrast to *maga* perhaps more elite connotations. (Forman 1972: 96) [emphasis of the author]

According to Lipski & Santoro (2007), young people use only *mga*; rural residents rarely do so and opt for *maga*; and *mana* is heard mainly among older urban residents regardless of their proficiency in Spanish. Riego de Dios (1989) considers these forms to occur in free variation and, like Barrios (2006), argues that these particles function as markers of overt plurality. In his brief description, Broad (1929) makes reference to *mana* and *maga*, but not *mga*, as the two interchangeable prenominal particles used to indicate nominal plurality. Similarly, McKaughan (1954) and Whinnom (1956) only mention *mana* for Zamboangueño Chabacano, even though *manga* does appear in McKaughan’s texts. The absence of *mga* in these older descriptions might be a sign of a later appearance of *mga*, probably as a consequence of the increasing influence of

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout this paper the spellings *mga*, *manga*, *mangga*, *mañga* and *mg* are considered to reflect the phonetic realization [ma'ŋa] and therefore grouped together with *mga*.

Philippine languages. In contrast, according to Steinkrüger (2013), 90% of plural nouns are marked by *mga* or the variants *maga* and *mana*.<sup>7</sup>

As Table 2 shows, *maga* accounts for around half the occurrences of the plural marker in both subsets, however, there is a remarkable discrepancy between SyP and ZdA in the use of *mga* and *mana*.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2.** Occurrences of the plural marker

	SyP		ZdA		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Mana</i>	160	7.90%	1420	23.06%	1580	19.31%
<i>Maga</i>	1128	55.68%	2917	47.38%	4045	49.43%
<i>Mga</i>	738	36.43%	1820	29.56%	2558	31.26%
Total	2026	100.00%	6157	100.00%	8183	100.00%

Table 3 shows that *mana* is actually used by a relatively small number of participants. In fact, almost half the occurrences appear in texts (comments or posts) by the same author, who happens to be the leader of the group and its most active and influential member. In contrast, *mga* is much more widely used, although not so among the most prominent participants. *Maga* falls somewhere in between.

This means that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of users of this social media network tend to use *mga*, but are exposed to the use of *mana* by some influential users, which, at least in the written domain, may or may not have an impact on them. It is also important to note that 6.15% of authors use all three markers at some point, 18.08% use two and 75.77% limit themselves to only one.

**Table 3.** Authorship of plural markers in ZdA

	Tokens	Texts	Authors	Texts per author	% Texts by most active author
<i>mana</i>	1420	1057	76	13.91	45.03%
<i>maga</i>	2917	2036	276	7.38	19.01%
<i>mga</i>	1820	1232	372	3.31	11.53%

Our corpus also offers some relevant qualitative data regarding attitudes towards the use of these markers. For example, some ZdA members who feel somewhat insecure post questions on this issue such as: *Paquemodo usa el palabra mana y maga?* ‘How do you use the words *mana* and *maga*?’ The members considered to be language experts

<sup>7</sup> Steinkrüger (2013) is the APiCS chapter dedicated to Zamboangueno Chabacano. These descriptions are rigid and somehow limited inasmuch as they provide concise information on a set of 130 features, favoring crosslinguistic comparisons over detailed grammatical or lexical analysis.

<sup>8</sup> The data for *mga* include all the spellings which most probably correspond to the realization [ma'ŋa]: seven occurrences of *manga* and four of *mangga* for SyP; and sixty-five of *manga*, forty-four of *mangga* and eleven of *mg* for ZdA.



tend to recommend *maga* or *mana* and present them as interchangeable. *Mga* is not recommended and is even represented as alien to the creole language: *the olden days it was mana but corrupted in modern times from the Tagalog word mga*.

*Mana* is described in ZdA as ‘formal’ or ‘archaic’ and is connected, for instance, with Spanish ‘mestizo’ actors in old films. Therefore, to a certain extent this particle is admired by nostalgic Zamboangueños and certainly retains the Spanish connotation pointed out by Forman (1972). *Mana* is also associated with rural speech, known to retain some conservative (more Spanish-like) features and, as a result, this variant may be stigmatized to some extent in young urban circles. In short, *mana* carries prestige for some Zamboangueños, but is used by others to mock the residents of rural areas like Merloquet.

The variant *maga* is sometimes represented in ZdA as informal inasmuch as it is much more widely used than *mana*. However, *maga* is also the most often used variety in the few formal domains where Zamboangueño is written, such as the media, educational materials and the odd administrative document. On the whole, this variant has a more neutral connotation than *mana* or *mga*, and in contrast to these, doesn’t seem to give rise to negative attitudes.

In quite a few cases, the spelling *maga* may in point of fact correspond to [ma'ŋa], normally represented as *mga*, so that the actual use of this variant is probably much higher in real life than data in the corpus might suggest. The members of ZdA share some doubts about the use of *mana* and *maga* but never *mga*, which is often represented as the marker of the younger generations. At any rate, the corpus offers samples of all kinds of attitudes. For example, one participant goes as far as to propose the use of the Spanish definite article *los* instead of the plural marker: *Debe era usa el palabra "los" ‘[we] should use the word los [instead of any of the plural markers]’*. Sometimes two variants of the marker are used in one sentence (2). Note also how the marker can pluralize two nouns.

- (2) *el mana techo del maga casa y escuela*  
 DEF PL roof of;DEF PL house and school  
 ‘the roofs of the houses and the schools’

Appendix A shows the most frequent clusters of two elements with the marker on the left. These data confirm that there are no lexical origin constraints as it is used to mark plurality of elements of Spanish origin (*mga hente* ‘people’),<sup>9</sup> Philippine origin (*mga bata* ‘children’), or English origin (*mga girls* ‘girls’). Notably, these three examples refer to humans, by far the most common semantic field in this table. Perhaps the very nature of the datasets, social media networks where people habitually talk about other

<sup>9</sup> Unstandardized spellings in the appendices provide some valuable information. For example, in Appendix A the choice of the spellings *hente*, *jente*, and *gente* for ‘people’ somehow correlates with the Philippine or Spanish connotation of the plural marker variants.

people, could explain this fact to a certain extent. The prominence of the token *palabra(s)* ‘word(s)’ may also have something to do with the frequent metalinguistic debates in ZdA posts. Among these clusters it is also possible to find both animate entities such as *mana chonggo* ‘monkeys’, and inanimate ones as in *mga casa* ‘houses’. The most frequent cluster with *mana* is a redundant plural: *mana jovenes* ‘young people’. In fact, this kind of structure is more common with this variant than with *maga* or *mga*, which aligns well with the hypothesis of its Spanish connotation. In contrast, Appendix A also shows how *mga* is more frequently combined with words of Philippine origin.

On another matter, some of the clusters in Appendix A include words other than nouns serving nominal functions. These cases, whose thorough analysis goes beyond the scope of this study, include determiners like *maga otro lenguaje* ‘other languages’, adjectives like *mga nuevo miembro* ‘new members’, the time marker *mga alas 8* ‘at eight o’clock’ or the habitual or imperfective TMA marker *el maga ta bende* ‘those who sell’. In this context, the preposition *de* can be interpreted as a reflection of the Tagalog morpheme *taga*, which derives demonyms from place names as in (3):

- (3) *Amo ese ta-come el maga de South Pacific.*  
 COP that IPFV-eat DEF PL from South Pacific  
 ‘That is exactly what those from the South Pacific eat.’

The ten most frequent clusters with the marker on the right are presented in Table 4 so as to better understand the contexts in which it is used.

**Table 4.** Ten most frequent elements on the right of the plural marker

	* + <i>mana</i> (278 types)	* + <i>maga</i> (839 types)	* + <i>mga</i> (628 types)
	N Cluster	N Cluster	N Cluster
1	690 <i>el mana</i>	987 <i>el maga</i>	493 <i>el mga</i>
2	128 <i>del mana</i>	345 <i>del maga</i>	178 <i>na mga</i>
3	101 <i>na mana</i>	313 <i>na maga</i>	129 <i>del mga</i>
4	58 <i>de mana</i>	138 <i>de maga</i>	65 <i>ng mga</i>
5	22 <i>ese mana</i>	87 <i>este maga</i>	52 <i>sa mga</i>
6	21 <i>este mana</i>	72 <i>mi maga</i>	45 <i>ang mga</i>
7	20 <i>mi mana</i>	69 <i>ese maga</i>	42 <i>este mga</i>
8	20 <i>mio mana</i>	60 <i>y maga</i>	35 <i>de mga</i>
9	14 <i>conel mana</i>	46 <i>tiene maga</i>	33 <i>konel mga</i>
10	14 <i>estos mana</i>	42 <i>ya maga</i>	30 <i>mio mga</i>

The most frequent combination (33.30% of the tokens in the complete list) is *el m\*a*, which marks plurality and definiteness. Table 5 shows how syntactic function and definiteness are marked in plural nouns. Interestingly, the variant *mga* is often preceded by particles foreign to Chabacano like *ang*, *ng* and *sa*, respectively marking

direct, indirect and oblique cases in instances of code-switching to Tagalog or Cebuano. The Spanish connotation of *mana* explains the fourteen occurrences of an inflected determiner: *estos* ‘these’.

**Table 5.** Contexts of the plural marker

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Oblique</b>	<b>Possessive</b>
Definite	<i>el mga</i>	<i>con el mga</i>	<i>na mga</i>	<i>del mga</i>
Indefinite	<i>mga</i>	<i>con mga</i>	<i>na mga</i>	<i>de mga</i>

The determiner *el*, therefore, indicates definiteness in (4) or (5), but its absence indicates indefiniteness in (6) and (7). The corpus provides instances of the plural marker in all possible combinations of definiteness and specificity. In (4), *maga maestro* refers to a specific group of teachers familiar to both the author of the comment and presumably to a good number of its readers.

- (4) *Onde ya el maga maestro?*  
 where already DEF PL teacher  
 ‘Where are the teachers now?’

Non-specificity and definiteness are the properties of (5), since it may refer to different foods.

- (5) *Ta-man-junto sila para cusi el maga comida.*  
 IPF-VERB-together 3PL to cook DEF PL food  
 ‘They get together to cook the foods.’

In contrast to the previous case, (6) most probably refers to elderly people in general and, therefore, this noun can be described as indefinite and non-specific.<sup>10</sup>

- (6) *Ese gad yo ta -oi con maga anciano-s.*  
 that EMPH 1SG IPFV-hear OBJ PL elder-PL  
 ‘I certainly used to hear that from elderly people.’

Finally, the combination of indefiniteness and specificity is exemplified in (7) where the author refers to specific members of the class ‘generals’.

- (7) *Mga general-s talla ya na EDSA Shrine.*  
 PL general-PL COP.there already LOC EDSA Shrine  
 ‘Some generals are already there at the EDSA Shrine.’

<sup>10</sup> Special abbreviations used: VERB ‘verbalizer’, EMPH ‘emphasis’, EXIST ‘existential’.

Nowadays, *mga* seems to be favored by an increasing number of Zamboangueños, but *maga* is still in use and is the variant of choice in all types of printed texts. The use of *mana* is common only among a limited number of mostly elder speakers and also among some nostalgic Zamboangueños who view this form as the most ‘authentic’ one. All in all, neither definiteness nor specificity seem to play an important role in the overt use of the marker. The prominence of plural nouns designating humans can probably be attributed in part to the context, but the data would also correspond with a plural marking hierarchy with humans at the top.

## 4.2. Inflection

The second most common plural formation strategy is the use of a Spanish vestigial feature: the suffix *-(e)s*.

- (8) *el palabra-s*  
 DEF word-PL  
 ‘the words’

The use of inflection is acknowledged but tends to be described as “non-predictable” (Riego de Dios 1989: 34), “remnants” (Lipski & Santoro 2007: 38) or as affecting just “a small set of nouns” (Forman 1972: 99). With the exception of *dalagas* ‘maidens’, Forman (1972: 111) circumscribes the use of the plural suffix to nouns of Spanish or English provenance. Quilis & Casado-Fresnillo (2008) or Miravite et al. (2009) list inflection as a just another possible way of marking nominal plurality.

Others either deny or ignore this feature. Broad (1929), for example, doesn’t allude to inflection as a possibility at a time when more vestigial Spanish traits were to be expected. McKaughan (1954) makes no reference to inflection either, although *ermanas* ‘sisters’ appears in his texts. On his part, Whinnom (1956: 81) attributes exceptions like *tres maravillas* ‘three wonders’ to “Spanish contamination”. Camins (1988) claims that “nouns, albeit of Spanish origin, are rarely saddled with the intricacies of gender and number” and, curiously enough, exemplifies this assertion with *maga estrellas* ‘stars’, perhaps considering it not a redundant plural but a lexicalization. Steinkrüger (2013) makes no reference whatsoever to inflection.

Appendix B contains the data of the one hundred most frequent tokens ending in *-s* in the corpus except those which cannot have a plural interpretation like *bus* or English words which wouldn’t appear in a Zamboangueño dictionary but are common, often due to the prevalence of code-switching. This table also includes the number of those same words without the final *-(e)s*. The data are ordered by the last column, which indicates the percentage of occurrences endings in *-s*. These data show that marking

inherent nominal plurality by means of inflection is a productive feature. A tentative classification of the contents of Appendix B would include these categories:

- Lexicalizations: Words which have been incorporated into Chabacano in their plural form but not necessarily with this semantic value. These elements, situated at the top of the table, never, or very rarely, occur without the *-s*, and therefore can't be considered cases of inflected plurals. §4.3 deals with these cases.
- Human groups: *vivientes* 'inhabitants', *compoblanos* 'town mates', *parientes* 'relatives', *personas* 'people', *filipinos*, or *hermanos* 'brothers', among many others. As in the case of the plural marker, this is a very prominent semantic field.
- Oral production: *pendehadas* 'jests', *risas* 'laughter', *chismis* 'gossip', *saludos* 'greetings', *palabras* 'words', *comentos* 'comments' or *resos* 'prayers'. Arguably, some of these elements could also be described lexicalizations. This could be the case of *voces* 'voice(s)', which appears as *voz/voces* in Santos (2010). The importance of this semantic field may be due to the nature of the debates which shape the corpus.
- Time: *horas* 'hours', *tardes* 'evenings', *tiempos* 'times', *meses* 'months'. Some of these words appear in fixed expressions of Spanish origin but others don't. In Tagalog both *oras* 'hour' and *beses* 'time' (as in an occasion) are lexicalizations.
- Food: *comidas* 'foods', *tamales*, *frutas* 'fruits', *sopas* '(corn) soup'.
- Others: *amores* 'loves', *pesos* 'Philippine currency'. Further down the list we find *estrellas* 'stars', *armas* 'weapons' or *islas* 'islands'. Entities like *estrellas* are not normally counted, and others like *pesos* are probably used more often in plural than in singular, while elements like *armas* could be considered mass nouns.

There are strong similarities between these data and the elements which according to Forman (1972: 101) are commonly inflected for plural: *ansyanos*, 'old folks', *ermanas* 'sisters', *syudadanos* 'city-dwellers', *sabjecks* 'subjects', *diyas* 'days', *eskwelas* 'schools', *pesos* 'pesos' or *meses* 'months'. The token *pajaros* 'birds' may point to the relevance of animacy as a possible factor that favors inflection but the data are unclear in this respect. The only other noun which has this value is *chinchis* 'lice', but this is probably a case of lexicalization as it is unusual to refer to these insects in singular.

Similar cases are *moscas* ‘flies/fly’ or *sangrihuelas* ‘leech(es)’, but again, treating them as collectives seems to explain the use of the vestigial inflection better than animacy. This interpretation is reinforced by the occurrence of nouns designating animals which appear less often in groups: *perro* (68) / *perros* (1) ‘dog(s)’. The use of inflection responds to a wide variety of factors apart from those just mentioned. For example, Forman (1972: 273) maintains, and the corpus partially ratifies, that the plural *escuelas* ‘schools’ occurs mainly in titles: *Superintendente de escuelas* ‘Superintendent of Schools’, a calque which shows how English may be contributing to the maintenance of inflection. The following examples reveal the productive use of inflection in very different contexts and functions: with numerals (9), with the object marker *con* (10), and also expressing indefiniteness (11). These are also examples of nouns from three semantic fields which seem to favor inflection: time expressions, language and humans. Oddly, example (12) shows how inflection can be used even by speakers worried about excessive Spanish influence on Zamboangueño.

- (9) *seis mes-es lang na Manila*  
 six month-PL only LOC Manila  
 ‘Only six months in Manila’
- (10) *asegun con mis amigo-s y familiar-es*  
 According to OBJ 1PL.POS friend-PL and relative-PL  
 ‘according to my friends and relatives’
- (11) *Hasta pariente-s ay-encontra tu aqui.*  
 even relative-PL IRR-find 2SG here  
 ‘You can even find relatives here.’
- (12) *No kita usa el palabra-s castellano.*  
 NEG 1PL.INCL use DEF word-PL Castilian  
 ‘Let’s not use Spanish words.’

The plural marker and inflection can even appear next to each other:

- (13) *el de antes maga gente y joven-es*  
 DEF old days PL person and youth-PL  
 ‘people from the old days and young people’

Our data show that inflection is productive and not limited to fossilized expressions, although constrained by lexical origin. On the other hand, it seems as if the fact that the plural is formed similarly in Spanish and English might be hindering the complete disappearance of inflection as a nominal plural marking option. Nowadays very few

Zamboanguenos are fluent in Spanish, and therefore this kind of bilingualism can be discarded as an element which may favor the retention of inflected plurals. Last but not least, the lack of a standardized spelling and the fact that many Zamboanguenos tend to aspirate /s/ in coda position are important factors to take into account when trying to make sense of the data in this corpus.

Farquharson (2007: 23) affirms that “of all the areas of Creole morphology, affixation has been the most sorely neglected”. This is probably the case of Zamboangueno, whose inflected plurals have never been duly analyzed and demand further examination, particularly concerning possible triggers.

### 4.3. Lexicalizations

We understand as instances of lexicalization those words that derive from the Spanish form for the plural like *mansanas* ‘apple(s)’, where the *-s* ending does not correspond to a plural morpheme. Whinnom (1956) first noted the case of words like *plores* ‘flower(s)’ which retain the form of the Spanish plural suffix *-(e)s* but not necessarily its value, perhaps as a result of the frequency of the plural forms, which favors their adoption as unmarked elements. Lipski & Santoro (2007) treat words like *plores* ‘flowers’ or *ohos* ‘eyes’ as single morphemes where *-(e)s* has no semantic force, therefore allowing for plural marking. Quilis & Casado-Fresnillo (2008) explicitly consider these cases to be lexicalizations. Interestingly, Miravite et al. (2009) indicate that the opposite process is also possible: *kompleanyo* (<Span ‘cumpleaños’) ‘birthday’, *kompleanyos* ‘birthdays’.

The boundary between lexicalizations and proper plurals is not always evident. Ariston (2002) lists them as always plural, while Forman (1972: 111) maintains that in these cases “/s/ has an apparently optional status – is separable – but is not clearly a marker of plurality”. The suffix for this author would be optional, perhaps on the decline, and particularly frequent in nouns such as *oho(s)* ‘eye(s)’ or *pyé(s)* ‘feet/foot’ which involve “anatomical bilateral symmetry” (Forman 1972: 113). Riego de Dios (1989) argues that the grammatical number of words like *gastos* ‘expense(s)’ can only be disambiguated with the plural marker.

Most of the elements at the top of Appendix B, those with over 90% of occurrences with no final *-s*, are lexicalizations and can be considered to be COLLECTIVES. This term is understood as a noun referring to members of a group which should be considered together as a unit (cf. Corbett 2000: 118). This category includes entities like plants, oral production and, arguably, paired body parts.

Plants are the most prominent subgroup: *guyabas* ‘guava(s)’, *ojas* ‘leaf/leaves’ and *ubas* ‘grape(s)’ never or almost never occur without the final *-s*. The list includes some fruits which are not of Spanish origin like *camias* or *rimas*, which also happen to end in *-s*. Remarkably, similar items like *frutas/prutas* ‘fruit(s)’ can have a plural

interpretation as in (14) or a singular one as in (15), which appears in a post accompanied by a picture of one single avocado. In addition, the corpus offers examples of *pruta* both indicating singular and preceded by the plural marker. Spanish borrowings in Tagalog like *letsugas* ‘lettuce’ or *ubas* ‘grapes’ also allow for singular, plural or non-count interpretations.

(14) *Madura ya este cuatro fruta-s.*  
 ripe already this four fruit-PL  
 ‘These four fruits are already ripe.’

(15) *Cosa prutas este?*  
 what fruit this  
 ‘What fruit is this?’

According to Michaelis et al. (2013: 105), “in many creoles and pidgins it is the plural forms of the body part terms in the base language which were reanalyzed as the creole/pidgin lexeme unspecified for number”. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in Appendix B, which contains paired body parts and related items like *chinelas* ‘slipper(s)’, *ojos* ‘eye(s)’, *sapatos* ‘shoe(s)’, *orejas* ‘ear(s)’, *rodillas* ‘knee(s)’ and *pies* ‘foot/feet’. These words can have both a singular and a plural interpretation:

(16) *un ojos y dos orejas*  
 an eye and two ear-PL  
 ‘one eye and two ears’

Some terms designating oral production behave as lexicalizations as they always appear with a final *-s*, e.g. *pendehadas* ‘jests’, *risas* ‘laughter’ or *chismis* ‘gossip’; however, they seem to have a non-count value as they are never preceded by the indefinite determiner *un* and very rarely by the plural marker. Although the tokens that designate human groups like *visinos* ‘neighbors’ or *vivientes* ‘inhabitants’ rarely occur without the final *-(e)s*, they are not lexicalizations since the singular form has been attested, and, in contrast to the other groups just mentioned, are often preceded by the plural marker or by quantifiers.

Other collectives which can be considered lexicalizations include food items like *huevos* ‘eggs’, insects like *chinchis* ‘lice’, and various other entities like *pastillas* ‘pills’. The number value of the lexicalizations in our corpus is not always easy to assign. These words are rarely marked for singular with *un* ‘a/an’ as in (16). Exceptions in our corpus are *un huevos* ‘an egg’ or *un mansanas* ‘an apple’. The plural marker accompanies these words only slightly more often than *un* and the most frequent cluster of this kind is *mga flores* ‘flowers’. Quantifiers like *muchu* or *cuanto* can indicate both plural and singular and, therefore, don’t always help to identify the correct number



interpretation. Often, as in (17), an uncountable interpretation is possible. The quantifier *manada* ‘many’ clearly indicates plurality but only occurs with lexicalizations in *manada risas* ‘peals of laughter’. Determining a specific number may be simply irrelevant in many cases.

- (17) *Alla muchu raton, lamuk y chinchis.*  
 There much mouse mosquito and louse  
 ‘There are a lot of mice, mosquitos and lice there.’

Corbett (2000: 173) explains how in some languages mass nouns can adopt a plural form. This could be the case of lexicalizations like *caballas* ‘mackerel’, which is never preceded by *un* ‘a’ or the pluralizer, but occurs with partitives like *pedaso de caballas* ‘a piece of mackerel’ or *ataw de caballas* ‘a bundle of mackerel’. In this regard, Schachter & Otones (1972: 112) explain that sometimes in Tagalog the “translation-equivalent of an English mass noun is a pluralized count noun”, and they go on to say that, in some cases, *mga* precedes mass nouns to express the idea of several masses as in *mga alikabok* ‘heaps of dust’. This influence may explain lexicalizations like *polbos* ‘dust’ and its use with the pluralizer in cases like *maga polbos de fruta* ‘fruit powders’ (powdered fruit). At any rate, the number value of some of these elements and the relationship between lexicalizations, plurals and mass nouns are issues that require further examination.

#### 4.4. Multiple marking

The plural marker can accompany inflected nouns in a redundant structure:

- (18) *el mga palabra-s*  
 DET PL word-PL  
 ‘the words’

Quilis & Casado-Fresnillo (2008) refer to this strategy as occasional and Miravite et al. (2009) list it as the third way to pluralize nouns. Forman (1972: 112) describes these redundant plurals as optional and offers *ermanos*, *maga ermanos* and *maga ermano* as three equivalent variants of ‘brothers’. All the examples of redundant marking included in his work refer to animate nouns. Lipski & Santoro (2007), on their part, allude to this possibility only in reference to families: *el maga Reyes* ‘the Reyes family’.

Table 6 shows that, on average, redundancies account for one quarter of the occurrences of the plural marker, and their frequency, perhaps not surprisingly, correlates with the Spanish or Philippine connotations of each variant.

**Table 6.** Multiple marking

	N	Marker + *s	%
<i>Mana</i>	1580	474	30.00%
<i>Maga</i>	4045	1014	25.07%
<i>Mga</i>	2558	505	19.74%
Total	8183	1993	24.36%

The most frequent combinations of the plural marker of any type ending in *-(e)s* are shown in Appendix C, including some words which are not nouns like *otros* ‘others’ or the time marker *alas*. These redundancies don’t occur with words of Philippine origin and are particularly prominent with nouns denoting human groups, such as *m\*a juvenes*, which occurs 139 times. Other recurrent semantic fields are oral production and body parts.

As for the value that multiple marking may have, my informant indicates that, in the case of human groups, it is optional or used for ‘emphasis’. The marker disambiguates the number of lexicalizations like *flores* ‘flower(s)’, and adds an approximative meaning when combined with the time marker *alas*. It is also possible to come across some instances of pluralized quantifiers and/or adjectives in structures like (19) which may not be productive, but seem to be resilient among some Zamboangueños.<sup>11</sup>

- (19) *Tiene juego de madjong mana cuanto-s conocido-s zamboangueño-s.*  
 EXIST game of mahjong PL a few known-PL Zamboangueño-PL  
 ‘A few Zamboangueño acquaintances had a game of mahjong.’

Redundant plurals are a salient feature and cannot be excluded from a thorough description of Zamboangueño.

#### 4.5. Zero-marking

Bare nouns can have a plural interpretation, as is also the case of many creoles (Holm 2000) and of some Philippine languages like Tagalog, where choosing between singular and plural is often unnecessary (Schachter & Otnes 1972: 111). Corbett (2000: 16) specifies that “the presence of *mga* indicates plurality, but its absence leaves the possibility of singular or general meaning”. However, zero-marking is a feature rarely mentioned in the literature other than in relation to numerals, which is discussed in the next section. Whinnom (1956) affirms that unmarked plurals are very frequent, but admits to not having clear examples in his corpus. Steinkrüger (2013) upholds that the occurrence of plural markers is variable (optional) for human or inanimate nouns and

<sup>11</sup> This could actually be a case of contextual inflection, at least in writing.

offers example (20). However, this may not be a good option taking into account the inherent plural semantics of the Spanish etymon and the fact that *hente* ‘person/people’ appears in some Zamboangueno dictionaries as having both a singular and a plural meaning.

- (20) *Tyéne hénte na kása.*  
 EXIST person LOC house  
 ‘There are people in the house’. OR: ‘There is somebody in the house.’  
 (Steinkrüger 2013)

Grant (2007: 179) states that overt plural marking of bare nouns is not categorical, but it is in fact the norm, and goes on to say that the sense of bare count nouns “will be indefinite and also non-specific, and will be construed as being plural rather than singular, although the number significance of the NP will not be crucial to the sense of the clause”. This description reminds us of the concept of GENERAL PLURAL (Corbett 2000: 9) or of the transnumeral value of bare nouns in Palenquero (Schwegler: 2007).

Our corpus provides a good number of bare nouns which can have a plural or a generic interpretation, often having a non-specific value. For example, *pasajero* (21) corresponds to ‘passengers’ in English, but perhaps as Grant (2007) suggests, in cases like this the number significance is not particularly important.

- (21) *Ta-pipina pasajero para Ayala gaha aquel?*  
 IPFV-pick.up passenger for Ayala perhaps that.one  
 ‘Did it [the bus] perhaps use to pick up passengers for Ayala?’

In (22) *lamok* ‘mosquito(s)’ could be considered a collective or even a mass noun, although the corpus also offers occurrences of this word preceded by the plural marker. The fact that bare count nouns with a plural interpretation are not uncommon for humans and for animals limits animacy as a factor which may favor overt marking.

- (22) *Ya-morde lang lamok kunele.*  
 PFV-bite only mosquito 3SG.OBJ  
 ‘Mosquitos just bit him.’

Sometimes bare nouns refer to various kinds of one entity, rather than to various units. (23) is an answer to a post showing a dish full of different kinds of vegetables and asking about its contents. It is important to note that other participants in the same thread use *mga gulay* ‘vegetables’ instead of simply *gulay*.

- (23) *Siguru gulay mesclaw irbido.*  
 perhaps vegetable mixed boiled  
 ‘Perhaps [it is] mixed boiled vegetables.’

The comment shown in (24) refers to posts with pictures of different species of birds and offers two variants of the plural marker and a bare noun with plural interpretation in just one sentence.

- (24) *el mga post del maga foto de pájaro*  
 DEF PL post of;DEF PL photo of bird  
 ‘the posts of pictures of birds’

As Grant (2007: 196) suggests, the facultative and free use of zero-marking and number neutrality requires further examination.

#### 4.6. Numerals and plural marking

Forman (1972: 112) indicates that *el tres mana ermano* ‘the three brothers’ is an example of an “apparently optional” redundant plural. However, he also refers to the approximative value of the plural marker before phrases involving number (Forman 1972: 215). Miravite et al. (2009) consider the marking of pluralization as optional but the only instances they provide of unmarked plurality involve numerals: *beynte kwatro ora* ‘twenty-four hours’. Conversely, authors like Lipski & Santoro (2007), Grant (2007) or Quilis & Casado-Fresnillo (2008) maintain that nouns preceded by numbers cannot be marked for plurality.

In order to understand how numerals can affect the marking of plurality, it is important to examine the possible influence of Philippine languages. For example, in Tagalog the marker preceding a numeral has an approximative value (Schachter & Otnes 1972), but indicates an exact number when placed between the numeral and the noun (Kaufman 2010). Although there is considerable variation, our data also point in this direction. The approximative value of *mga* is unmistakable in (25) and reinforced by *siguru* ‘perhaps’ in (26). Other cases like (27) are more uncertain, since it is hard to determine whether the author has gained exactly three kilos or approximately three kilos. Notice the numeral in combination with redundant marking of plurality in (27).

- (25) *Mga tres o quatro hora lang gayot yo ta -puede dormi.*  
 PL three or four hour only EMPH 1.SG IPFV-can sleep  
 ‘I can sleep only about three or four hours.’

- (26) *Ya-pwede yo oi siguro mga cinco rebentada lang!*  
 PFV- can I hear maybe PL five banger only!  
 ‘I was able to hear only perhaps about five bangers!’
- (27) *Mga tres kilo-s ya-subí.*  
 PL three kilo-PL PFV-go.up  
 ‘[I] gained (about) three kilos.’

As for the exact value of the plural marker placed between the numeral and the noun, there are some doubtful cases, but (28) presents a news headline which doesn’t allow for an approximative value.

- (28) *tres maga pajariador muerto*  
 three PL hunter dead  
 ‘three dead hunters’

There are 205 occurrences of *dos* \*s ‘two \*s’ and 56 of *tres* \*s ‘three \*s’. The most frequent tokens in this context are lexicalizations like *palabras* ‘words’, but some cases like (29) are clearly nouns inflected for plural.

- (29) *con dos gallina-s na costao*  
 with two hen-PL LOC side  
 ‘with two hens by his side’

In short, numerals do not necessarily constrain nominal plural marking, especially by means of inflection. In fact, there are even some instances of redundant marking with numerals. Moreover, a plural marker preceding numerals can have the approximative interpretation of Philippine languages like Tagalog or Cebuano.

#### 4.7. Reduplications

Reduplication is a prominent feature in creoles (Bakker & Parkvall 2005) and in several Philippine languages (Rubino 2013). However, this feature hardly appears in the literature for Zamboangueño. Frake (1971) and Lorenzino (2000) both refer to plurality as one of the possible interpretations of reduplications but provide no examples. Other than that, only Steinkrüger (2013) maintains that reduplications can have this interpretation and goes on to say that they account for 10% of all plural nouns.<sup>12</sup> He

<sup>12</sup> Other word classes, like interrogative and indefinite pronouns, are frequently reduplicated to indicate plurality (cf. Forman 1972: 109). This is also the case of numerals which acquire a ‘grouping’ value just like in Tagalog (cf. Schachter & Otones 1972: 2013): *dos-dos* ‘by twos, in pairs’.

exemplifies this feature with (30), a decontextualized example with a gloss that points towards a special kind of plural value, indicating abundancy or exhaustiveness.

- (30) *pyédra-pyédra*  
 stone-stone  
 ‘(all the) stones’ (Steinkrüger 2013)

Our corpus also offers *piedra-piedra* (31), but, according to my informant, this is only a calque from the Tagalog saying *Bato-bato sa langit*, ‘*pag tinamaan huwag magagalit*, which warns about the dangers of retaliation for those who ‘throw stones’ first.

- (31) *Piedra piedra na cielo, con quien tupa no rabia.*  
 stone-stone OBL sky OBJ who hit NEG get.angry  
 ‘[If you throw] stones in the air, don’t get angry if they hit you.’

Reduplication is hardly ever used to pluralize nouns in our corpus. Even cases like (32) are problematic, since there is no simplex for the noun *bichu-bichu* ‘antlion larva’, which could be interpreted as either plural or uncountable. The plural interpretation (with a distributive nuance) is, nonetheless, uncontroversial in a few cases like (33).

- (32) *Ya-anda tamen tu cuji bichu bichu alla?*  
 PFV-go also you grab antlion larva there  
 ‘Have you also gone there to grab antlion larva(e)?’

- (33) *Bien mucho clase clase de hente taqui ya.*  
 EMPH much kind of people COP.here already  
 ‘There are already a lot of different kinds of people here.’

The corpus offers partitives as the only consistent pattern of nominal plurality marked with reduplication: *saco-saco* ‘sacks’, *pedaso-pedaso* ‘pieces’, *lata-lata* ‘cans’ and *bidon-bidon* ‘five gallon jugs’. In cases like (34), reduplications have an abundative meaning according to my informant, supporting therefore the claims of Bruyn (1994: 260).

- (34) *Ta-traga ele sacco-sacco de mani.*  
 IPFV-swallow 3SG sack-sack of peanut  
 ‘He used to swallow (lots of) sacks of peanuts.’

Finally, there are also a few occurrences of the plural marker preceding reduplications which don’t have a plural value such as *mga casa-casa* ‘toy houses’ or *maga bata-bata* ‘servants’. In sum, with the exception of partitives, reduplication is, at most, only a

sporadic strategy to mark plurality in our corpus. These data differ significantly from those of APiCS.

#### 4.8. Associative plural

Associative plurals designate a heterogeneous group of close-knit individuals and normally consist of a focal referent and his or her associates (Daniel & Moravcsik 2013). This feature is common in Philippine languages and is usually marked by preposing a plural personal marker to a proper noun. In Tagalog this marker is *sina*, which indicates “the person named by the noun and another or others associated with that person” (Schachter & Otnes 1972: 113).

The Zamboangueño equivalent of *sina* is *kanda*, a word of Visayan origin which can also be used before a listing of personal nouns (Santos (2010: 49). This particle has been described as a “plural demonstrative pronoun” (Riego de Dios 1989: 100), “an indefinite pronoun” (Quilis & Casado-Fresnillo 2008: 455) a “phrase marker” (Forman 1972) or “an adjective” Santos (2010: 49). Steinkrüger (2013) alludes to *kaná* as an alternative to *kanda*.

The 141 appearances of *kanda* systematically precede proper nouns.<sup>13</sup> However, this particle only functions as an associative plural in a few cases like (35), where it can truly be interpreted as ‘and his/her circle’. *Kanda* often simply functions as the plural personal marker (36) or as a locative adverb (37), equivalent to Tagalog *kina*, meaning at ‘somebody’s place’ (cf. Schachter & Otnes 1972: 450). Finally, one of the two occurrences of the variant *kana* in the corpus is presented in (38).

(35) *Kanda Juan tamen ta-ase-liyos kon el diila fellow teacher.*  
 PL Juan also IPFV-VERB-lies OBJ DEF 3PL.POS fellow teacher  
 ‘Juan and his circle also used to lie to their fellow teachers.’

(36) *Huntu ya-llega kanda Juan y Maria.*  
 together PFV-arrive PL Juan and Maria  
 ‘Juan and Maria arrived together.’

(37) *na costao di canda Gonzales*  
 LOC side of PL Gonzales  
 ‘on the same side as the Gonzales family’

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<sup>13</sup> The original proper names have been changed in these four examples to preserve anonymity.

- (38) *serka na casa de kana Gonzales*  
 near LOC house of PL Gonzales  
 ‘near the house of the Gonzales family’

The associative plural is a clear example of the (increasing) influence of substrate and adstrate languages in Zamboangueño.

## 5. Conclusion

This detailed analysis of data from the interaction of some online social groups has shed light on a number of patterns of plural marking in Zamboanga Chabacano. The growing use of the variant *mga* [ma'ŋa] is part of a broader process of convergence with other Philippine languages. However, perhaps as a counterweight to this tendency, the variant *maga* functions as the de facto standard. *Mana* is becoming almost residual and may index nostalgic attitudes toward Spanish. The plural marker usually has an approximative value when preceding numerals but not when used after them. The suffix *-(e)s* is still productive, co-occurs with the plural marker in redundant plural structures, and has been attested after numerals. The only clear pattern of reduplication marking plurality is that of partitives with an abundative meaning. We argue that reduplication is less salient than inflection as a plural marking strategy. On another note, the right context seems to allow, but not to demand, zero-marking, indicating GENERAL NUMBER in many cases. One final related finding is the frequent use of the associative plural marker *kanda* as a locative adverb. The prominence of plural marking among words denoting humans, language or time may be natural in the context of a social media network, but a correlation with animacy cannot be discarded.

The influence of Philippine languages is obviously bigger than that of the lexifier, since, except for inflection, it can account for all of the strategies presented. The resilience of some vestigial features of Spanish origin may be attributed in part to the prestige that this language still has among certain speakers, but in cases like inflection it is probably reinforced by the congruence of *-s* marking in English and Spanish. Interestingly, there are remarkable coincidences with creoles with very different substrate languages. All in all, the expression of nominal plurality in Zamboanga Chabacano is anything but simple. Some areas that need to be further examined are variation, triggers for inflection and multiple marking, and the interpretation of lexicalizations and bare nouns. This data-driven study offers nuanced descriptions of some features, challenges the saliency of others and suggests some new lines of research.

Apart from trying to expand our understanding of nominal plural marking in Zamboangueño, this study also aimed at making a contribution to language documentation studies. As said before, social media networks offer an opportunity to



maintain and even exhibit minority or under-described languages. In fact, for many of the speakers of this creole language, a great deal, if not all, of their writing practices take place online, therefore, the vitality of the digital domain cannot be overlooked. Social media networks can provide researchers with an important source of contemporary linguistic data in the case of poorly described languages like Zamboanga Chabacano, as they offer ever-increasing amounts of naturally occurring language. Besides, the use of corpus linguistics tools can allow for an evidence-based analysis of quantitative data, which in this case has revealed clear and consistent patterns of use that are unmistakably part of the speakers' repertoires. The qualitative data, on the other hand, support some of the findings and offer some interesting examples of language attitudes.

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**Appendix A.** Most frequent clusters of the plural marker

	<i>mana</i> N 770 types / 1580 tokens	<i>maga</i> N 1802 types / 4045 tokens	<i>mga</i> N 1324 types / 2427 tokens
1	58 <i>mana juvenes</i>	80 <i>maga de</i>	85 <i>mga hente</i>
2	46 <i>mana bata</i>	77 <i>maga bata</i>	71 <i>mga bata</i>
3	46 <i>mana palabras</i>	75 <i>maga palabra</i>	33 <i>mga de</i>
4	44 <i>mana de</i>	71 <i>maga hente</i>	29 <i>mga jente</i>
5	24 <i>mana chavacano</i>	57 <i>maga juvenes</i>	27 <i>mga anak</i>
6	22 <i>mana gente</i>	55 <i>maga gente</i>	27 <i>mga palabra</i>
7	21 <i>mana jente</i>	44 <i>maga otro</i>	26 <i>mga hombre</i>
8	16 <i>mana mujeres</i>	37 <i>maga anak</i>	24 <i>mga juvenes</i>
9	15 <i>mana mayores</i>	33 <i>maga palabras</i>	23 <i>mga otro</i>
10	15 <i>mana palabra</i>	32 <i>maga tiempo</i>	18 <i>mga Viejo</i>
11	14 <i>mana hombre</i>	28 <i>maga vivientes</i>	17 <i>mga alas</i>
12	14 <i>mana vivientes</i>	26 <i>maga mujer</i>	16 <i>mga tiempo</i>
13	14 <i>mana zamboanguenos</i>	23 <i>maga hombre</i>	14 <i>mga mujer</i>
14	12 <i>mana hente</i>	22 <i>maga jente</i>	12 <i>mga palabras</i>
15	12 <i>mana letra</i>	21 <i>maga estudiante</i>	12 <i>mga uban</i>
16	12 <i>mana zamboangueno</i>	19 <i>maga sypunins</i>	10 <i>mga amigo</i>
17	11 <i>mana vieja</i>	18 <i>maga casa</i>	10 <i>mga bisinos</i>
18	10 <i>mana casa</i>	17 <i>maga nuevo</i>	10 <i>mga chavacano</i>
19	10 <i>mana español</i>	17 <i>maga viejo</i>	10 <i>mga judges</i>
20	10 <i>mana numeros</i>	16 <i>maga alas</i>	10 <i>mga nombre</i>
21	10 <i>mana pajaros</i>	16 <i>maga dedo</i>	9 <i>mga amigos</i>
22	9 <i>mana anak</i>	16 <i>maga pono</i>	9 <i>mga bus</i>
23	9 <i>mana buruja</i>	16 <i>maga zamboangueno</i>	9 <i>mga comida</i>
24	9 <i>mana miembros</i>	15 <i>maga retratos</i>	9 <i>mga ta</i>
25	9 <i>mana otro</i>	14 <i>maga buruja</i>	9 <i>mga tao</i>

**Appendix B.** Most frequent lexicalizations and inflected plurals

<b>Token</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>(e)s</b>	<b>%</b>
1. <i>pendehadas</i>	134	0	100,00%
2. <i>risas</i>	109	0	100,00%
3. <i>bisinos</i>	85	0	100,00%
4. <i>hojas</i>	54	0	100,00%
5. <i>chismis</i>	47	0	100,00%
6. <i>chinelas</i>	39	0	100,00%
7. <i>guyabas</i>	39	0	100,00%
8. <i>datiles</i>	38	0	100,00%
9. <i>lanzones</i>	32	0	100,00%
10. <i>selos</i>	28	0	100,00%
11. <i>besinos</i>	28	0	100,00%
12. <i>pastillas</i>	26	0	100,00%
13. <i>mansanas</i>	25	0	100,00%
14. <i>polbos</i>	25	0	100,00%
15. <i>ubas</i>	22	0	100,00%
16. <i>vecinos</i>	22	0	100,00%
17. <i>chinchis</i>	20	0	100,00%
18. <i>ojas</i>	117	1	99,15%
19. <i>flores</i>	180	2	98,90%
20. <i>ajos</i>	55	1	98,21%
21. <i>ojos</i>	194	4	97,98%
22. <i>tomates</i>	46	1	97,87%
23. <i>sapatos</i>	75	2	97,40%
24. <i>visinos</i>	37	1	97,37%
25. <i>lagrimas</i>	33	1	97,06%
26. <i>huevos</i>	29	1	96,67%
27. <i>camias</i>	24	1	96,00%
28. <i>vivientes</i>	95	4	95,96%
29. <i>pendejadas</i>	22	1	95,65%
30. <i>compoblanos</i>	38	2	95,00%
31. <i>orejas</i>	68	4	94,44%
32. <i>caballas</i>	28	2	93,33%
33. <i>rimas</i>	37	3	92,50%
34. <i>gastos</i>	22	2	91,67%
35. <i>vesinos</i>	22	2	91,67%
36. <i>polvos</i>	42	4	91,30%
37. <i>zamboanguenos</i>	1141	124	90,20%
38. <i>rodillas</i>	34	4	89,47%
39. <i>juevos</i>	20	3	86,96%
40. <i>vecinos</i>	48	8	85,71%
41. <i>sopas</i>	34	7	82,93%
42. <i>centavos</i>	29	6	82,86%
43. <i>pies</i>	145	50	74,36%
44. <i>besos</i>	69	26	72,63%
45. <i>oficiales</i>	21	8	72,41%
46. <i>amigos</i>	341	131	72,25%
47. <i>estados</i>	27	14	65,85%
48. <i>jovenes</i>	193	107	64,33%
49. <i>actividades</i>	20	13	60,61%
50. <i>tardes</i>	188	123	60,45%
51. <i>recuerdos</i>	39	28	58,21%
52. <i>pesos</i>	103	78	56,91%
53. <i>dias</i>	1177	941	55,57%
54. <i>beses</i>	70	58	54,69%

**Appendix B.** Most frequent lexicalizations and inflected plurals (cont.)

<b>Token</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>(e)s</b>	<b>%</b>
55. <i>barrios</i>	39	35	52,70%
56. <i>rezos</i>	94	89	51,37%
57. <i>prutas</i>	35	35	50,00%
58. <i>administradores</i>	21	21	50,00%
59. <i>parientes</i>	62	63	49,60%
60. <i>noches</i>	331	406	44,91%
61. <i>saludos</i>	40	54	42,55%
62. <i>anos</i>	44	60	42,31%
63. <i>memorias</i>	49	69	41,53%
64. <i>minutos</i>	22	31	41,51%
65. <i>informaciones</i>	38	54	41,30%
66. <i>resos</i>	20	30	40,00%
67. <i>años</i>	156	241	39,29%
68. <i>zamboanguños</i>	101	167	37,69%
69. <i>miembros</i>	91	157	36,69%
70. <i>filipinos</i>	130	228	36,31%
71. <i>meses</i>	51	106	32,48%
72. <i>voces</i>	31	68	31,31%
73. <i>comentos</i>	26	64	28,89%
74. <i>tamales</i>	22	55	28,57%
75. <i>personas</i>	46	132	25,84%
76. <i>pajaros</i>	40	120	25,00%
77. <i>frutas</i>	56	187	23,05%
78. <i>dedos</i>	33	113	22,60%
79. <i>palabras</i>	338	1210	21,83%
80. <i>amigas</i>	82	302	21,35%
81. <i>burujas</i>	33	131	20,12%
82. <i>oras</i>	27	114	19,15%
83. <i>mayors</i>	71	302	19,03%
84. <i>veces/vez</i>	168	741	18,48%
85. <i>padres</i>	30	147	16,95%
86. <i>canciones</i>	72	368	16,36%
87. <i>mujeres</i>	71	369	16,14%
88. <i>retrato</i>	52	305	14,57%
89. <i>letrato</i>	22	138	13,75%
90. <i>ideas</i>	20	127	13,61%
91. <i>almas</i>	24	200	10,71%
92. <i>comidas</i>	30	256	10,49%
93. <i>hermanos</i>	24	231	9,41%
94. <i>horas</i>	24	283	7,82%
95. <i>manos</i>	20	254	7,30%
96. <i>amores</i>	23	302	7,08%
97. <i>cosas</i>	126	2874	4,20%
98. <i>chabacanos</i>	38	982	3,73%
99. <i>tiempos</i>	22	872	2,46%
100. <i>chavacanos</i>	29	2589	1,11%

### Appendix C. Most frequent redundant plural clusters

<i>mana</i> *s 206 types / 479 tokens		<i>maga</i> *s 467 types / 1014 tokens		<i>mga</i> *s 306 types / 497 tokens	
N	Cluster	N	Cluster	N	Cluster
1	58 <i>mana jóvenes</i>	57	<i>maga juvenes</i>	24	<i>mga juvenes</i>
2	46 <i>mana palabras</i>	33	<i>maga palabras</i>	17	<i>mga alas</i>
3	16 <i>mana mujeres</i>	28	<i>maga vivientes</i>	12	<i>mga palabras</i>
4	15 <i>mana mayores</i>	19	<i>maga sypunins</i>	10	<i>mga bisinos</i>
5	14 <i>mana vivientes</i>	16	<i>maga alas</i>	10	<i>mga judges</i>
6	10 <i>mana números</i>	15	<i>maga retratos</i>	9	<i>mga amigos</i>
7	9 <i>mana miembros</i>	13	<i>maga amigos</i>	9	<i>mga bus</i>
8	9 <i>mana parientes</i>	13	<i>maga mayores</i>	8	<i>mga vivientes</i>
9	7 <i>mana otros</i>	12	<i>maga bus</i>	7	<i>mga boys</i>
10	6 <i>mana alas</i>	11	<i>maga bisinos</i>	6	<i>mga girls</i>
11	6 <i>mana ancianos</i>	11	<i>maga boys</i>	6	<i>mga mujeres</i>
12	6 <i>mana burujas</i>	11	<i>maga canciones</i>	6	<i>mga students</i>
13	6 <i>mana letras</i>	11	<i>maga letratos</i>	6	<i>mga sypunins</i>
14	6 <i>mana retratos</i>	11	<i>maga miembros</i>	5	<i>mga compoblanos</i>
15	5 <i>mana administradores</i>	10	<i>maga cosas</i>	4	<i>mga canciones</i>
16	5 <i>mana canciones</i>	10	<i>maga otros</i>	4	<i>mga chavacanos</i>
17	5 <i>mana cosas</i>	9	<i>maga pajaros</i>	4	<i>mga mayores</i>
18	5 <i>mana rodillas</i>	9	<i>maga zamboanguenos</i>	3	<i>mga amigas</i>
19	4 <i>mana amigos</i>	8	<i>maga flores</i>	3	<i>mga burujas</i>
20	4 <i>mana dedos</i>	8	<i>maga mujeres</i>	3	<i>mga cosas</i>
21	4 <i>mana flores</i>	8	<i>maga parientes</i>	3	<i>mga customers</i>
22	4 <i>mana ojos</i>	7	<i>maga memorias</i>	3	<i>mga flores</i>
23	4 <i>mana pies</i>	7	<i>maga postings</i>	3	<i>mga hovenes</i>
24	3 <i>mana amigas</i>	6	<i>maga administradores</i>	3	<i>mga parientes</i>
25	3 <i>mana besinos</i>	6	<i>maga hijos</i>	3	<i>mga pics</i>



**Appendix D. Glossary**<sup>14</sup>

<i>actividades</i> ‘activities’	<i>gastos</i> ‘expenses’	<i>palabra</i> ‘word’
<i>administradores</i> ‘administrators’	<i>gente</i> ‘people’	<i>parientes</i> ‘relatives’
<i>ajos</i> ‘garlic’	<i>guyabas</i> ‘guavas’	<i>pastillas</i> ‘pills’
<i>alas</i> ‘at’ (time)	<i>hente</i> ‘people’	<i>pendejadas</i> ‘nonsense’
<i>almas</i> ‘souls’	<i>hermanos</i> ‘brothers’	<i>personas</i> ‘people’
<i>amigo</i> ‘friend’	<i>hijos</i> ‘sons/offspring’	<i>pesos</i> ‘Philippine currency’
<i>amores</i> ‘loved ones’	<i>hojas</i> ‘leaves’	<i>pies</i> ‘feet’
<i>anak</i> ‘offspring’	<i>hombre</i> ‘man’	<i>polbos</i> ‘powder/dust’
<i>ancianos</i> ‘old people’	<i>horas</i> ‘hours’	<i>polvos</i> ‘powder/dust’
<i>an(ñ)os</i> ‘years’	<i>hovenes</i> ‘young people’	<i>pono</i> ‘tree’
<i>barrios</i> ‘neighborhoods’	<i>huevos</i> ‘eggs’	<i>prutas</i> ‘fruit’
<i>bata</i> ‘child’	<i>informaciones</i> ‘pieces of news’	<i>recuerdos</i> ‘memories’
<i>beses</i> ‘times’	<i>jente</i> ‘people’	<i>resos</i> ‘prayers’
<i>besinos</i> ‘neighbors’	<i>jovenes</i> ‘young people’	<i>retrato</i> ‘photo’
<i>besos</i> ‘kisses’	<i>juevos</i> ‘eggs’	<i>rezos</i> ‘prayers’
<i>bisinos</i> ‘neighbors’	<i>lagrimas</i> ‘tears’	<i>rimas</i> ‘breadfruit’
<i>buruja</i> ‘witch’	<i>lanzones</i> ‘Lansium domesticum’	<i>risas</i> ‘peals of laughter’
<i>caballas</i> ‘mackerel’	<i>letra</i> ‘letter’	<i>rodillas</i> ‘knees’
<i>camias</i> ‘Averrhoa bilimbi’	<i>letrato</i> ‘photo’	<i>saludos</i> ‘greetings’
<i>canciones</i> ‘songs’	<i>mansanas</i> ‘apples’	<i>sapatos</i> ‘shoes’
<i>casa</i> ‘house’	<i>mayores</i> ‘elderly people’	<i>selos</i> ‘jealousy’
<i>centavos</i> ‘cents’	<i>memorias</i> ‘memories’	<i>sopas</i> ‘soup’
<i>chinchis</i> ‘bedbugs’	<i>meses</i> ‘months’	<i>sypunins</i> ‘members of SyP’
<i>chinelas</i> ‘slippers’	<i>miembros</i> ‘members’	<i>ta</i> ‘imperfective marker’
<i>chismis</i> ‘gossip’	<i>minutos</i> ‘minutes’	<i>tamales</i> ‘tamales’
<i>comentos</i> ‘comments’	<i>mujer</i> ‘woman’	<i>tao</i> ‘persona’
<i>comida</i> ‘food’	<i>noches</i> ‘night’	<i>tardes</i> ‘evenings’
<i>compoblanos</i> ‘fellow residents’	<i>nombre</i> ‘name’	<i>tiempo</i> ‘time’
<i>cosas</i> ‘things’	<i>nuevo</i> ‘new’	<i>tomates</i> ‘tomatoes’
<i>datiles</i> ‘dates’ (fruit)	<i>numeros</i> ‘numbers’	<i>uban</i> ‘companion’
<i>de</i> ‘of’	<i>oficiales</i> ‘officials’	<i>ubas</i> ‘grapes’
<i>dedo</i> ‘finger’	<i>ojas</i> ‘leaves’	<i>veces/vez</i> ‘time’ (occasion)
<i>dias</i> ‘days’	<i>ojos</i> ‘eyes’	<i>vecinos</i> ‘neighbors’
<i>español</i> ‘Spanish’	<i>oras</i> ‘hours’	<i>vesinos</i> ‘neighbors’
<i>estados</i> ‘states’	<i>orejas</i> ‘ears’	<i>vicinos</i> ‘neighbors’
<i>estudiante</i> ‘students’	<i>otro</i> ‘(an)other’	<i>vieja</i> ‘old woman’
<i>flores</i> ‘flowers’	<i>padres</i> ‘fathers’	<i>viejo</i> ‘old man’
<i>frutas</i> ‘fruits’	<i>pajaro</i> ‘bird’	<i>visinos</i> ‘neighbors’
		<i>vivientes</i> ‘residents’
		<i>voces</i> ‘voices’

<sup>14</sup> This list includes the spelling variants as they appear in the interaction.