

# **A GEO-LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC TRADE-PARTNERS OF THE RESIDENTS IN THE ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL STRIP**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the economic partnerships among the traders in Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental strip through a geo-linguistic approach. Descriptive- survey method of research was employed. The oldest traders from each locality were interviewed and the data gathered were presented using the percentage, frequency distribution and attribution analysis. It revealed that majority of the traders having business tie-ups were coming from Ozamiz City and Dipolog City despite the geographical distance between the two cities; office and school supplies ranked first among the commodities being bartered; Cebuano and Mandarin were the languages commonly spoken by the abovementioned traders. This result is accounted to the languages spoken with 38.7 percent of attribution; 35 percent for the population size and 26.3 percent for the number of schools existing in the localities. It implies that the commonality of languages between traders is a topmost consideration in forging business partnerships for common understanding as well as the number of people and institutions in the locality that would directly be responsible for the bulk of demand and consumption of the goods being traded.

**KEYWORDS AND PHRASES:** geo-linguistic, historical analysis, economic trade-partners, Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental Strip

## **INTRODUCTION**

As reported in the Ethnologue (2009), the world today has 6, 909 living languages of which 2, 322 of them exist in Asia, and the Philippines has 181 languages which are distributed among its three groups of islands namely: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Taking into consideration the role of language in business transactions and relationships, the country has the edge over the other neighboring countries in Asia by reason of the multiplicity of the languages spoken. However, language is not only the sole consideration in business transaction. Over the last few decades, major changes in the world economy have altered conditions for economic growth at

regional, national, and international levels. These events demand re-examination of theories and models of the location of economic activity and the growth of territorial economies. Today, we speak of a new "knowledge based" economy, and of globalization, as parallel processes that are transforming the nature of the economy and its geography (Storper, 2004).

One of the major types of economic activity is the trade wherein it was done through transferring of goods and services from one place to another. Trade is commonly called barter and happens in the market. It exists for the comparative advantage in the production of some tradable commodity; thus, they benefit from each other especially when they are adjacent to each other and have similarities in their dialect. Further, in the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, Ricardo (2010) advanced the doctrine that states that when an inefficient producer sends the merchandise, it produces bet to a country able to produce it more efficiently both countries benefit.

Based on the report of the Economy Watch, the Philippines is historically having been an important centre for commerce for centuries for its ethnic minority, namely, the Chinese who were also its first occupants. The archipelago has also been visited by Arabs and Indians for the purpose of trading in the first and early second millennium. As of the 21st century, the country is a member in several international trade organizations including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and World Trade Organization (WTO). Since 1980s, the Philippines has opened its economy to foreign markets, and established a network of free trade agreements with several countries. **The United States is one of the Philippines top trading partners.** In 2010, according to US Department of Commerce, trade between the Philippines and US amounts to US\$15.4 billion. United States is also the Philippines largest foreign investor, with foreign direct investment close to US\$6 billion at the end of 2009.

Under the new Aquino administration, the government plans to open up the country to more foreign investment in industries such as business processing operations, mining and tourism. However, this move may be hindered by restrictions such as prohibition of foreign ownership of land and public utilities.

A study entitled "Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2010" published in December last year by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) showed that last year, it took 15 days to complete trade procedures in the country, or three days faster than in 2005. In terms of expenses, meanwhile, a trade transaction in the country in 2010 was cheaper by 20.4% at \$554 using 2000 prices, compared with five years before.

Just like the Philippines having business tie-ups abroad, there are also business partnerships and linkages that have been taking place in the local communities which have greatly contributed to the economic growth and development of the country. Among these is the business partnership among the traders from the Provinces of Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental which has started more than two decades ago and has healthily prospered at present. Hence, this study was conceived to analyze historically the economic trade-partnership among the traders in Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental Strip through a geo-linguistic

approach.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the concept of Claude Lévi-Strauss cited by Wiens (2005), a society's system of linguistic exchange is the basis for all of its arrangements for exchanging items, such as goods and services. Linguistic exchange can be verbal or written, while goods can be exchanged by way of barter, or purchased and sold for money. In conversation, the participants' presence permits valuation of the words offered and accepted, as the verbal interaction proceeds. Similarly when items are bartered, the participants' presence permits them to measure the quality and the quantity of commodities prior to, and during trade, to ensure quid pro quo. However, with a recorded communication, participants deliver or receive the message by way of an intermediary, such as paper. While during barter exchange participants sell and buy commodities simultaneously, with monetary exchange participants sell or buy commodities in exchange for money. To ensure quid pro quo in the transaction between a buyer and seller with monetary exchange, commodities are transacted at agreed prices express in terms of money as a unit of account. An intermediary in linguistic and commodity exchanges necessitates an extra step in an exchange transaction.

While oral communication and barter permit direct valuation of words heard or items acquired by participants, the intermediary contrivances of written communication and monetary exchange engender a deferral of satisfaction. The receiver of a written message must read and process the words to understand it, while the recipient of money must in turn purchase items to obtain satisfaction through their use or consumption. Moreover, the sender of a written message cannot directly ascertain and value its effect on the receiver.

Exchange limited to barter trade restricts the efficiency of a community's technology of exchange, and thereby it members' consumption opportunities. Linguistic exchange limited to speech confines the community's scope of communications. Barter requires a coincidence of wants among participants at a specific time and place; much like a willing speaker requires interested listeners. However, written communications can be stored and read at a later time, much like money obtained in trade can be stored and used later to purchase items for consumption. Since participants must be present for oral and barter exchanges, an exchange cannot be separated to take effect at different instances of time and at different locations.

This is also supported by the concept of Trudgill (1983) which states that the linguistic variable, together with a number of methodological and theoretical insights from human geography, can improve our knowledge of the relationship between language and geography, and of the geographical setting of linguistic change.

Scholars such as Bailey (1973) consistently thought that geography is an irrelevant factor in the contact and diffusion processes and linguistic phenomena which accordingly geographical dispersions can be so chaotic as to challenge the plausibility of any hypotheses about the orderliness of language variation. However, Chambers made an answer to this statement which is sufficiently straightforward as it is clarifying that even prima facie, it is simply inconceivable that language, as a human property, would not reflect the spatial relationships which bring

human beings together and keep them apart. True, the reflection of language in geography may not be as simple as Bailey and others apparently expected, but that is surely no reason dismisses it altogether. He further asserted that what is required is a richer set of hypotheses about language variation and a more profound understanding of spatial networks and diffusion pattern.

In addition, Chambers and Trudgill (1980) stressed that geolinguistics, from the outset, is completely aware of the shortcomings of the 'traditional way' and provides us with a more dynamic dimension, where spatial inter-relationships of linguistic features are of great importance. In fact, Chambers (1993) has called it 'sociolinguistic dialectology', and, similarly, Trudgill (1983) has labeled it as 'sociolinguistically informed dialectology' and has always defended its integrity from the point of view of the rigor and accuracy required by empiricist research.

Given these considerations, this approach may look into the individual linguistic behavior at a micro-level of interaction vis-à-vis the geography of the individual involved in the interaction.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study aimed to analyze historically the economic trade-partnership among the traders in Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental Strip through a geo-linguistic approach. Specifically, it sought to find out the languages spoken and the distance between traders from the two provinces, and the primary goods being traded by them.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

This study employed the descriptive-survey method. It was conducted in the Provinces of Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental. The respondents of the study were the oldest traders in each locality that have had trade-partnership during 1990-2000. Secondary data were gathered from the City Treasurer's office of every city or municipality of both provinces. Percentage, frequency distribution and attribution analysis were used in the presentation of data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1** Language Used by the residents in trading

<b>Language</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Both used Cebuano and Mandarin	17	38%
Both used Cebuano Only	6	13%
Both used Cebuano but the other knows how to speak Turkish	2	4%
Both used Cebuano but the other knows how to speak Mandarin	16	36%
Both used Cebuano, the other one speaks Mandarin and the other one speaks Turkish	4	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 reveals that 17 or 38% out of 45 respondents know how to speak Cebuano and Mandarin languages which are eventually used in trading, and this is followed by 16 or 36 % who both used Cebuano but the other knows how to speak Mandarin. In other words, the dominant languages used in trading are Cebuano and Mandarin. It could be inferred that trading in the two provinces is dominated by Cebuanos and Filipino-Chinese. This finding jibes with the report of Ethnologue (2009) wherein they disclosed that Chinese language ranked one among the languages with at least 3 million first-language speakers and the Cebuano ranked 57 in the list. Further, as revealed by Hinner (2010), all business transactions revolve around people. And when people interact, they need to communicate with one another. One could, thus, postulate that in essence no business is possible without communication. That is why an understanding of communication is critical to an understanding of business.

**Table 2 Distances of Trade-Partners between Misamis Occidental and Zamboanga del Norte**

		MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL					
		Calamba	Lopez Jaena	Oroquieta	Jimenez	Clarin	Ozamiz
ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE	Dapitan	---	---	46.02 km	---	---	58.65 km
	Dipolog	34.24 km	47.85 km	52.48 km	62.24 km	71.73km	73.08 km
	Katipunan	---	---	---	---	---	68.20 km
	Manukan	---	---	---	---	---	91.21 km
	Sindangan	79.5 km	---	---	---	---	92.13 km
	Liloy	---	---	---	---	---	128.40 km

Table 2 shows the distances of trade partners between the localities of Misamis Occidental and Zamboanga del Norte. From the table, it could be seen that there are traders from Dipolog City and the Municipality Sindangan who have established partnership with traders from Ozamis City. It implies that demand and supply are the major factors being considered and not the distance between traders. As stressed by APEC and SEAMEO RELC (2010), today many societies and economies are dependent upon one another for their daily workings. Economies that have advantages in one area may trade with partners that have advantages in others.

**Table 3 List of Primary Goods Being Traded by Both Provinces**

Primary Goods	Frequency	Percentage
Assorted Items	4	9%
Candle	5	11%
Cell Phones and Cell Phone Accessories	1	2%
Chlorine	4	9%
Copra	3	7%

Dressed Chicken	3	7%
Ice	1	2%
Office / School Supplies	18	40%
Organic Fertilizer	1	2%
Plywood	1	2%
Pottery Products	2	4.5%
Printer and Copier	2	4.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	45	100%

Table 3 shows that out of 12 products being traded, office or school supplies ranked one among the others and the least traded goods were the cell phones and accessories, ice, organic fertilizer and plywood. This implies that the major clients serving as consumers of the products being exchanged are coming from schools and offices. It could be concluded that a number of schools and offices exist in the localities where the establishments of these traders are strategically located. Hence, in order for a business to prosper, a trader must think of his target clients. A business cannot function and grow in isolation.

**Table 4** Number of Trade-Partners between Misamis Occidental and Zamboanga del Norte

		MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL						Total
		Calamba	Lopez Jaena	Oroquieta	Jimenez	Clarin	Ozamiz	
ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE	Dapitan	0	0	1	0	0	3	4
	Dipolog	5	2	3	1	3	19	33
	Katipunan	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Manukan	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Sindangan	4	0	0	0	0	4	4
	Liloy	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		5	2	4	1	3	30	45

Table 1 presents the number of trade-partners between Misamis Occidental and Zamboanga del Norte. It revealed that the trade-partnership mostly occurred between the residents of Ozamiz City and Dipolog City. This could be attributed to the commonality of the languages spoken between traders and the demand-supply consideration are the major indicators of these economic partnership, not the geographical distance of the traders involved in the business endeavors.

**Table 5** Results of the Attribution Analysis

Indicator	Percentage
Population	35%
No. of schools	26.3%

Languages Spoken	<b>38.7%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 summarizes and presents the percentage of attribution of the indicators that could be linked to the existence of the economic trade-partnerships of the residents in Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental strip. From the table, the languages spoken between traders obtained 38.7 % which made it the prime reason behind the business linkage; 35% of attribution went to the population of the localities involved since the residents in these places are the ones who determine the rate of consumption and the bulk of demand of the products being traded as well as the number of schools surrounding the business establishments which happened to have 26.3 % of attribution.

## CONCLUSION

The commonality of the languages spoken between traders is of great importance and a major indicator in business transactions and relationships, not the geographical distance between them. The proximity between traders came out to be the least priority in business ventures since population and the number of institutions surrounding the business establishments are the next indicators of business tie-ups.

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