

A Proposal to Modify *Ibanag* Orthography

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Ibanag is one of the major languages spoken by the original people of the Cagayan Valley. There are three identified variants of the language: *Northern Ibanag*, spoken in the Pamplona-Abulug-Aparri-Camalaniugan-Lallô area, in Northern Cagayan Province; *Central Ibanag*, spoken in the Tuguegarao-Solana area; and *Southern Ibanag*, spoken in San Pablo, Cabagan and towns further south in Isabela Province.

Most probably, the original language was *Northern Ibanag*. Linguistic evidence shows that Tuguegarao has been heavily influenced by *Itawes*, a language related to Ibanag; and *Cabagan Ibanag* has been influenced by *Iraya*, another related language.

Other related languages besides *Itawes* and *Iraya* are *Malaweg*, spoken in Rizal town and surrounding areas in Southwestern Cagayan; *Yogad*, spoken in Angadanan and Echague towns in Southern Isabela; and *Gaddang* and *Isinai*, spoken in Nueva Vizcaya Province.

The Dominican missionaries assigned to the Cagayan Valley from the 1580s to 1930s did intensive research in the structure and lexicon of Ibanag and other languages of the Valley. Two of the outstanding studies on Ibanag are *Arte y Regla de la Lengua Ibanag* by Fr. Fausto de Cuevas, O.P. and *Diccionario Ibanag-Español* by Fr. José Bugarin, O.P. Other missionaries worked on *Yogad*, *Gaddang* and *Isinai*. Most Dominicans became proficient in the native languages spoken in the areas to which they were assigned. To this day, not a few old people remember Fr. Julián Malumbres, O.P., who was the Parish Priest of Aparri and Tuguegarao in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries for his eloquent sermons in Ibanag. He also wrote a *Historia de Cagayan*, in Spanish.

The Spanish influence on Ibanag is most evident in loan words and Ibanag orthography. The letters *c*, *j*, *q* and *x* and the semi-vowel *y* are used in Spanish and given the sound equivalents of “se” for *c*, “jota” for *j*, “ku” or “cu” for *q*, and “equis” for *x*; *y* in Spanish is called “i griega.”

The consonants *c* and *g* pose problems for pronunciation. When *c* and *g* occur before the vowels *e* and *i*, they are pronounced as *k* and *g*. Examples: *cena*, “supper”; *cine*, “movie”; *general*, “general”; *gigante*, “giant, huge”; *calor*, “heat, warmth”; *colera*, “cholera”; *cuchara*, “spoon”; *garaje*, “garage”; *gozar*, “to enjoy”; *gusano*, “worm”.

Basic Assumptions

Language is what people speak — the sounds, intonation and rhythm of one language differ from those of another language.

Writing is the setting down of sounds into letters and other symbols.

There are letters or characters which do not represent the sounds of the language. There are also sounds for which there are no letters or characters.

We believe that, as closely as possible, the *Ibanag* language should be written the way the Ibanag people speak it.

Proposal for Change

The letters *c*, *j*, *q* and *x* should be used only for borrowed words.

For *Ibanag* words ending with the glottal stop, symbolized in the phonemic inventory as [ʔ], we could adopt the “maragsa” symbol [^] for words stressed on the last syllable, and the “malumi” symbol [`] for words stressed on the second to the last syllable. Examples: *allô* (“pity”); *makimallô* (“to pray, to ask for pity”); *anâ* (“child”); *anà* (“children, offspring”). Note in this last example that the change in stress also signals a change in meaning from singular to plural.

The glottal stop is also morphemic. It is used to symbolize possession, meaning "my" when used with nouns ending with a vowel. Examples: *wagi* ("brother, sister, sibling"); *wagî* ("my sibling"); *atawa* ("spouse"); *atawà* ("my spouse, husband, wife"); *ulu* ("head"); *ulû* ("my head"). Also, words ending with the diphthong may change the diphthong to *e* with the glottal stop added; words ending with the diphthong *aw* change the diphthong to *o* with the glottal stop added to show possession. Examples: *balay* ("house"); *balê* ("my house"); *ammay* ("rice"); *ammê* ("my rice"); *palataw* ("bolo"); *palatô* ("my bolo"); *vullaw* ("throat"); *vullô* ("my throat").

When used with verbs ending with a vowel, the glottal stop represents the pronoun "I" in Ibanag. Examples: *ammu* ("to know"); *ammû* ("I know"); *itolî* ("to return something"); *itolî* ("I return something"); *iyangay* ("to bring something"); *iyangê* ("I bring something"); *ipanaw* ("to take away something"); *ipanò* ("I take away something").

With the common noun markers *i* ("the"), *na* ("of the [for possession]") and *ta* ("to or from") assimilation occurs when the word following the marker begins with a consonant. Examples: *ib balay* ("the house"); *ik kofun* ("the friend"); *id dalan* ("the road"); *if fungan* ("the pillow"); *ig gabi* ("the night"); *iz zila* ("the tongue"); and so on. No assimilation occurs with words beginning with vowels. Examples: *i abbing* ("the child"); *i elefante* ("the elephant"); *i inafî* ("the cooked rice"); *i ollu* ("the first"); *i ulu* ("the head"); and other examples.

Examples of *na* constructions denoting possession: *ifu nab bavi* ("tail of the pig, the pig's tail"); *don nak kayu* ("leaves of the tree"); *yama na abbing* ("father of the child, the child's father"); *funu nav vulan* ("end of the month").

Examples of *ta* constructions: *umay tat Tuguegarao* ("going to Tuguegarao"); *maggafu ta Iguig* ("coming from Iguig"); *mevulun tab biyahe* ("to go with the trip"); *manaw ta umma* ("leave in the morning").

Inventory of Ibanag Phonemes

The segmental phonemes, or the distinctive sounds of the *Ibanag* language are the vowels, diphthongs, consonants and semi-vowels. The prosodic, or suprasegmental phonemes are stress, pitch, and

internal and terminal junctures. Spoken language combines all of these features which give the language its characteristic accent, intonation and rhythm.

Vowel sounds are all voiced; that is, produced by the vibration of the vocal cords. They are classified according to tongue height—high, mid and low—, and tongue position—front, central and back. *Ibanag* has identified vowels: the high front vowel *i*, the mid-front vowel *e*, the mid-central, or *schwa* vowel, the low back open *o*, and the high front vowel *u*. Diphthongs are a combination of a vowel and a glide, or semi-vowel; *Ibanag* has the high front diphthongs *ay* and *aw*, the low back diphthong *ow*, and the high back diphthong *uw*.

In contrast with English, the *schwa* vowel, or mid-central vowel, occurs in stressed position and is usually symbolized as [a]. Note the following examples: *bannag* [bán-nag] (“river”); *bannag* [bannág] (“tiredness”); *bannág* (“numbness”); *abbag* [ábbag] (“the other side of the river”); *abbag* [abbág] (“crosswise”).

Consonant sounds are classified according to point and manner of articulation. The points of articulation are the lips, the teeth, the lips and teeth combined, the gum ridge or alveoli, the hard palate, the soft palate and the glottis. The manners of articulation are stops, nasals, fricatives, lateral, trill and semi-vowel. Consonants are either voiceless or voiced when produced by the human speech mechanism. An inventory of the nineteen (19) *Ibanag* consonants follows:

	<i>Lips</i>	<i>Lips/Teeth</i>	<i>Teeth</i>	<i>Gum ridge</i>	<i>Velum</i>	<i>Glottis</i>
<i>Stops vl</i>	p		t		k	'/^/
	b		d		d	
<i>Nasals vd</i>	w			n	ng	
<i>Fricative</i>						
<i>vl</i>		f		s		h
<i>vd</i>		v		z		
<i>Lateral vd</i>				l		
<i>Trill vd</i>				r		
<i>Semi-vowel vd</i>	w				y	

Prosodic Features

Stress in *Ibanag* is phonemic. A change in stress signals a change in meaning. Examples: *agal* ("call"); *agál* ("liver"); *pitu* ("whistle"); *pitú* ("seven"); *anâ* ("son, daughter"); *anà* ("offspring, children").

Intonation and rhythm depend upon the unstressed and stressed syllables of speech. In an utterance, important words are stressed with one primary stress occurring in the utterance. A rising intonation pattern in utterance signals a question that requires a "yes" or "no" answer. A falling intonation signals a statement or an information question. Examples:

Egga im misa ta a las siete? ("Is there a Mass at 7 o'clock?")

Wan, egga. ("Yes, there is.") *Awan.* ("There is none.")

Sitaw id diyan nak Katedral? ("Where is the Cathedral?")

Egga tak kalye Rizal, aranni tap Palacio na Arzobispo. ("It is on Rizal Street, near the Archbishop's Palace.")

Ibanag Morphology

Morphemes, or minimal forms in a language with meaning, are divided into *free* forms and *bound* forms. Free forms are words that stand by themselves; bound forms, or enclitics, occur with words.

Free forms are generally classed into content words and functions words. The content words are nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The function words are pronouns, noun markers, conjunctions, prepositions and relaters.

Bound forms, or enclitics, are forms that occur with other forms or words. In English, examples of bound forms are the pluralizers and possessives for nouns, the noun-forming affixes, the verb-forming affixes, and the adjective and adverb-forming affixes. Examples: boy, boys, boy's, boys'; danc^{er}, farm^{er}; mast^{er}, mist^{ress}; ox, oxen; child, child^{ren}; play, play^s, play^{ing}, play^{ed}; big, big^{ger}, big^{gest}; quick, quick^{ly}; forc^{eful}, forc^{efully}.

In *Ibanag*, enclitics occur with content forms to change their meanings. Note the changes in the following examples: *tolay* ("man, person"); *totolay* ("men, persons"); *balay* ("house"); *babalay* ("houses"); *baddi* ("small"); *baraddi* ("small, plural"); *dakal* ("big"); *darakal* ("big,

plural"); *umay* ("to go"); *minay* ("went"); *lumakag* ("to walk"); *liminakag* ("walked"); *mangâ* ("to get, obtain"); *nangâ* ("got, obtained"); *kanan* ("to eat something"); *kinan* ("ate something"); *lumakag* ("to walk"); *makalalakag* ("always walking"); *dumakal* ("to grow up"); *ziminakal* ("grew up"); *pakanan* ("to feed someone something"); *pinakan* ("fed somebody something").

There are free forms and bound forms in *Ibanag* pronouns. The forms and their occurrences are as follows:

sakan, sô ("I"). These forms occur at the beginning of the utterance only. Example: *Sakan si Juan* ("I am Juan"); *Sô ik kaka nga anâ* ("I am the eldest child").

-â, -ngâ, tâ, ku, ', ta, ("I"). The occurrences of these bound forms meaning "I" are as follows:

-â occurs with verbs ending in a consonant. Examples: *Manaw-â* ("I leave"), *Mabbabal-lâ* ("I wash clothes"), *Makkageg-gâ* ("I sweep").

-ngâ occurs with verbs ending in vowels and *-ng*. Examples: *manoli* ("to return"); *Manoli-ngâ* ("I return"); *mapollu* ("to go ahead"); *Mapollu-ngâ* ("I go ahead"); *mattuddu* ("to teach"); *Mattuddu-ngâ* ("I teach").

-tâ occurs only with verbs ending in a glottal stop. Examples: *mazzigû* ("to take a bath"); *Mazzigu-tâ* ("I take a bath"); *massapatû* ("to put on shoes"); *Massapatu-tâ* ("I put on shoes").

ku occurs with verbs ending with verbs ending with the suffix *-an*. Examples: *apan* ("to get"); *Apak ku ib bola* ("I get the ball"); *gayaman* ("to play with something"); *Gayamak ku ib bola* ("I play with the ball").

The glottal stop ['] meaning "I" occurs with verbs ending in a vowel. Examples: *ammû* ("to know"); *Ammû' yaya* ("I know him"); *ipollu* ("to lead"); *Ipollû' ip parada* ("I lead the parade").

The free forms for "you, singular" are *sikaw, ka*, and *mu*. The only bound form is *-m*. Examples: *Sikaw si Rosa* ("You are Rosa"); *Si Juan ka* ("You are Juan"). The bound form *-m* occurs with verbs ending in a vowel. Examples: *ammu* ("to know"), *ammum* ("you know"), *ituddu* ("to teach"), *ituddum* ("you teach"). *mu* occurs with verbs ending with a consonant. Examples: *apan* ("to get"); *apam mu* ("you get"); *agalan* ("to call"); *agalam mu* ("you call").

All the other pronoun forms are free forms with the exception of the nominative and possessive enclitics for "I", "my", "you, singular", and "your, singular." A listing of all the other free pronouns follows:

- *sakan*, *so'* ("I"); *ku* ("my"); *niyakan*, *niyo'* ("to, from me").
- *sikaw*, *ka*, *mu* ("you, singular"); *mu* ("your"); *nikaw* ("to you").
- *yaya* ("he, she"); *na* ("his, her N."); *sa* ("to him, to her").
- *sitta*, *ta* ("we dual"); *N ta* ("our N dual"); *nitta* ("to us dual").
- *sittam*, *ittam*, *tam* ("we inclusive"); *N tam* ("our N"); *nittam* ("to us inclusive").
- *sikami*, *kami*, *mi* ("we exclusive"); *N mi* ("our exclusive"); *nikami* ("to us exclusive").
- *sikamu*, *kamu*, *nu* ("you plural"); *N nu* ("your N plural"); *nikamu* ("to you plural").
- *ira*, *da*, *ra* ("they"); *N da*, *N ra* ("their N"); *nira* ("to them").

To illustrate the modifications in *Ibanag* orthography proposed in this paper, the following examples will illustrate the changes that we hope will help in writing the language to approximate closely the way *Ibanags* speak the language.

- Old spelling: *i taqquilala na Santa Cruz...* ("the sign of the Cross..."). New spelling: *it takkilala nas Santa Cruz...* (Id).

- Old spelling: *Gloria ta Dios ta katannangan...* ("Glory to God in the highest..."). New spelling: *Gloria tad Dios tak katannangan...*

- Old spelling: *I Bagu nga Pakkasinabban anna Salmo ira...* ("The New Testament and the Psalms"). New spelling: *Ib Bagu nga Pakkasinabban annas Salmo ira...* (Id).

- Old spelling: *Ama mi, nga maddian ta Langi-t, marayarayaw paray i Nagan Mu...* ("Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name..."). New spelling: *Ama mi, a maddiyat tal Langi', marayarayaw paray ing Ngagam Mu...* (Id.)

We realize that it is difficult to have these proposals accepted by those who speak, read and write in *Ibanag*. However, the writer hopes that they would consider these proposed changes in *Ibanag* orthography so that a more accurate, or phonemic, spelling of *Ibanag* words and utterances can be made to benefit those interested in the language. □