

Writing in My Own Language Inibaloi

First of all, we do not have an official Inibaloi orthography yet. The working orthography described herewith is currently being used by the Inibaloi Scripture Translation Project and is generally known by members of the Flock of Christ Ministries (formerly known as the Ibaloi Christian Fellowship of Churches, ICFC) and other entities using the Kankansiyon na Pengirejaw Son Apo Shiyos (an Inibaloi Christian Hymnal). Other materials in which the Inibaloi Translation Project's working orthography was used are the trial versions of translated OT Scriptures and translated Building on Firm Foundations Bible Study materials.

If accepted by other language development entities working in the Ibaloi area, there is a very high possibility that current students in elementary through college can become literate in the orthography. If fully accepted by the community, this system can be easily learned by most people in Ibaloi communities.

Generally, this system has a high degree of acceptance by the people who had been reading it for a considerable time. For those encountering it for the first time, they may have doubts if the orthography is legitimate. Some are against it with the reason that it is not like the English or Filipino alphabets being taught in schools. With proper engagement, people with such doubts and resistance may come to embrace it as their own.

An important thing to take note of is that, this working orthography is in continuous development stage. As we continue to use it, we will learn more about how to effectively use it.

Information about the Language

Inibaloi is a Philippine-type Austronesian language spoken by approximately 186, 000 people living in central and southern Benguet province and in western Nueva Vizcaya province of the Philippines. Speakers of the language are called the Ibaloi people, one of the indigenous ethnic groups collectively known as Igorot who live in the mountains of the Cordilleras in Northern Luzon. Alternate names of the language are Ivadoy, Ibaloy, Ibaloi, and Nabaloi. Neighboring languages to Inibaloi are Karao, Kalanguya, Kankanaey and I-wak.

Inibaloi Phonemes

Inibaloi has 23 phonemes, nineteen are consonants and four are vowels as shown in the chart below using the International Phonetic Alphabet. (Phonemes are between slash lines and the allophones are in brackets.)

Consonant Inventory

	BILABIAL	LABIO-DENTAL	ALVEOLAR	POST-ALVEOLAR	PALATAL	VELAR	UVULAR	GLOTTAL
PLOSIVE/ STOP	/p/ /b/		/t/ /d/			/k/ /g/	/q/	/ʔ/
NASAL	/m/		/n/			/ŋ/		
FLAP/TAP			/r/					
FRICATIVE		[f] [/v/]	/s/	/ʃ/		[ɣ]	[χ]	[h]
AFFRICATE				[tʃ] /dʒ/				
APPROXIMANT					/j/	/w/		
LATERAL APPROXIMANT			/l/					

Vowel Inventory

	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
CLOSE	/i/	[ɨ]	[u]
CLOSE-MID	[e] [ɛ]	/ə/	/o/
OPEN		/ɑ/	

Working Orthography Description

1) /p/ and [f]

Should [f] be represented? /p/ may appear as [f] in the Inibaloi language but this is not universal for all Ibaloi areas. For consistency, the Inibaloi Scripture Translation Project decided not to represent [f].

2) /k/ and /q/

How do we deal with the two “*k*’s?” This is quite a big problem in writing Inibaloi. /k/ and /q/ are separate phonemes as shown by the following examples:

/k/		/q/	
kapkap	‘to slice something’	qapqap	‘to grope’
kalkal	‘to chew something’	qalqal	‘to search through something’

Since we are used to the languages taught in Philippine schools, we perceive these two phonemes as both “*k*.” But reading Inibaloi texts requires for these two phonemes to be distinguished for correct pronunciation. But how do we represent them? The Inibaloi Scripture Translation Project decided to use *k* to represent /q/ and *kh* to represent /k/. One option that was suggested to the project is to use *c* to represent /k/. However, we are not only considering how to write Inibaloi but also how we will transition to other languages used in the academe like English. So the project opted not to use *c* to distinguish the Inibaloi sound from the multiple sounds represented by *c* in English.

3) /q/ and /χ/ and /h/

The uvular stop /q/ changes into a fricative [χ] if found between vowels and among the younger generation of speakers, this phoneme may change into /h/ intervocallically. For consistency, the Scripture translation project opted to only write the basic phoneme /q/ which is represented in writing as *k*.

4) /g/ and /ɣ/

/g/ is pronounced as /ɣ/ when found between vowels but it is still written as *g*.

5) The Glottal Stop /ʔ/

The glottal stop is represented as a hyphen only if it is part of a consonant cluster, eg. taʔkəp is written as *ta-khep* and baʔjat is written as *ba-jat*. It is not written word-initially. It is not also written between two vowels except for rare cases that it is necessary.

6) Writing /j/ and /w/

Like other Philippine languages, /j/ is written as *y* and /w/ is also written as *w* in Inibaloi. However, there is question as to how to write them when they are preceded or followed by a vowel. Should it be *-oi* or *-oy*? Should it be *towang* or *toang*? The Inibaloi Scripture Translation Project decided to write the consonants *y* and *w* and NOT use vowel clusters.

7) The [v/] Problem

This phoneme has at least two pronunciations in the Ibaloi areas. It may be heard as [v], [w], or [g^w]. The Inibaloi Scripture Translation Project solution is to write this phoneme as *v* except word-initially. This solution is still being tested and rules on how to do this may clearly be stated later. This phoneme should not be

confused with /b/ which changes into [v] when found between two vowels. As for the [v] which is an allophone of /b/, it is still written as **b**.

8) The /ʃ/ and [tʃ]

/ʃ/ appears in few Ibaloi areas as [tʃ]. For consistency, the Scripture Translation Project decided to represent /ʃ/ which is written as **sh**.

9) Other Consonants

The rest of the consonants have no difficulty: /b/ is written as **b**; /d/ is written as **d**; /t/ is written as **t**; /d/ is written as **d**; /g/ is written as **g**; /m/ is written as **m**; /n/ is written as **n**; /ŋ/ is written as **ng**; /s/ is written as **s**; /dʒ/ is written as **j**; /w/ is written as **w**; and /l/ is written as **l**.

10) Vowels

Vowel phonemes are written as **a**, **i**, **o**, and **e**(for the mid-central). Some writers in Inibaloi both write **o** and **u** like Filipino and some are also writing both the **i** and **e**. However, doing this is not necessary in Inibaloi. Also, doing this may cause confusion in writing because it requires much decision making about how to spell Inibaloi words.

11) Alphabet

So the alphabet being used by the Inibaloi Scripture Translation Project then is: **a, b, d, e, g, i, j, k, kh, l, m, n, ng, o, p, r, s, sh, t, v, w, y**. Since the language continues to develop, extension includes **c, f, h, q, u, x, z, ch**.

May this little write-up be of help to other Ibalois. –The Inibaloi Scripture Translation Team

Aa
aso
tawa

Bb
bato
tebal
kalab

Dd
dason
adirong
alad

Ee
ebanol
bedat
edet

Gg
dagit
baag

Ii
itek
dogit

Jj
jegjeg
jamjam

Kk
kalkal
kalat
kaybang
etak

Kh kh
khalkhal
khamajan
ekhay
akhew

Ll
palit
matekal

Mm
mateba
tamil
jamjam

Nn
namit
anak
daman

Oo
oleg
solat
bolo

Pp
payew
epat
taap

Rr
taroy
paras

Ss
sapol
asas
paras

Tt
tawa
potot
kalat

Vv
aseva
tavey
evatan

Ww
wara
awat
silew
atiw

Yy
shiyay
payew
baley