

2. THE ALPHABET AND WRITING SYSTEM

The full Bikol alphabet contains 28 letters. Six of these are used only in the writing of loan words borrowed primarily from English. The alphabet is as follows.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N N G O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z and ' which represents the glottal stop and is written in medial and final position in the word.

2.1 The writing of Native Bikol Words

All words which are native to Bikol are written with the following 20 letters.

A B D G H I K L M N N G O P R S T U W Y '

The spelling system adopted in the writing of Bikol words follows closely that used for the national language, Tagalog-based Pilipino. This is basically a phonetic system and the written word closely resembles the pronunciation of the word when spoken. The major differences are in the use of ' to represent the glottal stop, and the writing of 'o' in non syllable-final position, discussed below. Differences also occur in the writing of vowel sequences such as 'ue' and 'ion' in words borrowed from Spanish. This is discussed in section 2.2.1

2.1.1 The writing of 'i' and 'e'

Native Bikol words are written only with the vowel /i/ and not with /e/. This is a convention which has been adopted for this dictionary, and represents the position taken in developing the Tagalog-Pilipino alphabet as well. The convention is based on the lack of a meaningful distinction between the vowels /i/ and /e/. (See the discussion in section 3: THE SOUND SYSTEM OF BIKOL.) Where words have traditionally been spelled with 'e', however, and where actual pronunciation reflects this earlier spelling, a cross-referenced listing is made in the dictionary.

hérak see hírak pity

2.1.2 The writing of 'u' and 'o'

As with /i/ and /e/, no meaningful distinction exists between the sounds /u/ and /o/ in Bikol. Both letters, however, are used in the writing of Bikol words, and the distribution of these letters reflects the distribution in the Tagalog-Pilipino alphabet.

'u' is written in any syllable which is not word-final.

lúgi business loss
dakúla' big

'o' is written only in the final syllable of the word.

bakó' no
dagóm needle

The following words have both 'u' and 'o'.

mundó' sad
 pu'ón begin

The orthographic or spelling convention set out above applies only to the writing of the base word. When a base is suffixed, which may result in a syllable containing 'o' being no longer in word-final position, the 'o' is not changed to 'u'. This is different from the system used for Tagalog-Pilipino where the 'o' would be changed to 'u'.

gíbo do gibóhon to do
 hákot transport hakóton to transport

Where words have traditionally been spelled with 'o' in the first syllable, a cross-referenced listing is made in the dictionary.

oríg see uríg pig

2.2 The Writing of Words Borrowed from Spanish

The following explains the system adopted in the writing of loan words borrowed from Spanish. It is felt that this system helps maintain the form of the Spanish word, something which is important to many Bikolanos, while at the same time introducing a patterned regularity into the spelling system in accordance with the systems adopted for other Philippine languages.

Mintz, Malcolm Warren, and José Del Rosario Britanico. 1985.
 Bicol-English Dictionary. Diksiónárong Bìkol-Inglés. Quezon City:
 New Day Publishers.