

## 1.1 Consonants

The two-letter symbol *ng* represents the velar nasal phoneme which occurs in the English words *sing* and *singer*. Not only does *ng* occur word final (*tabang*) and word medial (*bangon*, *panggas*, *bangbang*) but it also occurs word initial (*ngadan*, *ngipen*).

The voiceless stops, *p*, *t*, and *k* are never aspirated, that is, they are not pronounced with a puff of air following. The phoneme *p* may be either a stop or fricative when occurring between vowels; the fricative is pronounced like an *f* but with both lips.

Glottal stop is a consonant which is written as in other Philippine orthographies as follows.

1) It is not written when it occurs word initial (*agong*, *ikan*, *eden*, *odan*, *utung*).

2) It is not written when it occurs between vowels (*buun*, *doen*, *baay*, *lieg*, *kaen*, *meapon*).

3) It is written as a grave accent over the vowel when it occurs either before a consonant or at the end of a word (*tòlid*, *kànen*, *mèpiya*, *sìdo*, *màmìs*, *olò*, *batà*, *golì*, *apò*, *sìsì*).

4) It is written as a hyphen when it occurs following a consonant (*eg-ogpà*, *mig-elomo*, *tig-apò*).

If the conventions of writing glottal stop were to be ignored, much confusion would result. There would then be no way to discriminate between pairs of words which differ only by the presence or absence of glottal stop.

*olo* 'head'; *olò* 'only'  
*soso* 'breast'; *sosò* 'mollusk'  
*baba* 'carry'; *babà* 'short'; *bàbà* 'mouth'  
*ebo* 'enter water'; *ebò* 'disembowel'  
*inapit* 'stop and fetch'; *in-apit* 'stop and leave'  
*baog* 'valley'; *bawog* 'to dip'

In addition to its use to represent glottal stop, a hyphen is also used to separate reduplicated stems to make reading them easier. When used for this purpose the hyphen does not necessarily represent glottal stop (*tawal-tewalan*, *netaga-taga*, *neeneng-enengan*, *migpebelaw-belaway*, *miggamà-gamà*).

## 1.2 Vowels

There are five vowels: one front, three central and one back. The front vowel *i* is high unrounded, and has the sound of the vowel in the English word *feet* (*ini*, *ibing*, *bikbik*).

The back vowel *o* is mid rounded and has the sound of the vowel in the English word *boat* (*doton*, *ogpo*, *bokbok*).

The three central vowels *a*, *e*, and *u* are respectively low, mid and high. The low central vowel *a* has the sound of the vowel in the English word *father* (*alad*, *balay*, *lala*).

The mid central vowel *e* is always pronounced as a very short vowel sound. It has the sound of the vowel in the English word *but* (*ebel*, *kebkeb*, *mebenes*, *doen*).

The high central vowel *u* has no equivalent vowel sound in English and is a longer vowel sound

than *e* and is formed with the tongue positioned higher in the mouth (*down, punù, balud, bugsak, utung*). It is the least frequently occurring vowel.

Five significant vowel sounds are distinguished in Manobo, but only three significantly contrastive vowel sounds exist in Cebuano Visayan, the major language spoken in Mindanao. According to Wolff,<sup>3</sup> the three contrastive vowels in Cebuano, and their ideal pronunciation, are: front (*i*), central (*a*), and back (*u*). The vowels distinguished in Manobo and Cebuano Visayan are contrasted in Figure 1.

#### Vowels of Sarangani Manobo:

	front	central	back
high	i	u	
mid		e	o
low		a	

#### Vowels of Cebuano Visayan:

	front	central	back
high or mid	i		u
low		a	

Figure 1. Significantly Contrasting Vowels

Native speakers of Cebuano who attempt to learn, speak, and read Manobo have particular difficulty in hearing and pronouncing the differences among the three central vowels, *a*, *e*, and *u*. Contrasts among them are shown by the following pairs of words.

dalem 'inside of'	delem 'night'
kànen 'food'	kànan 'eat at'
alas 'pungent'	eles 'hide'
kalep 'dive'	kelep 'full of'
kalag 'to joke'	kelag 'to cry'
dan 'they'	den 'already'
doen 'there is'	doun 'a reason'
sibelek 'crave'	buluk 'mottled'
lebak 'broken'	luba 'happy'
baleng 'drunk'	bulung 'confused'
belad 'hand'	balud 'waves'
pelà 'armpit'	pulùk 'sad'
tapay 'previous'	tapuy 'fermented rice'
bagsà 'satisfy'	bugsak 'laundry'
gowang 'shout'	gowung 'tribe'
sabang 'rivermouth'	sabung 'fishtrap'

In spelling Manobo words, each of the vowel sounds is represented by a single vowel symbol; and when reading Manobo, each vowel symbol represents a single vowel sound. This principle contrasts significantly with the common practice of writing vowels in Cebuano. Although Cebuano has only three contrastive vowel sounds, five vowel symbols are commonly used in written Cebuano. According to Wolff, "In Cebuano publications /i/ is sometimes written *i*, sometimes *e*, but with no consistency; and /u/ sometimes is written *u*, sometimes *o* (again with no consistency)."<sup>4</sup>

Although this lack of economy in writing vowels in Cebuano may have only minor consequences, the practice of writing vowels inconsistently can not be carried over into the writing of Manobo vowels. All five vowel symbols must be used consistently in order to represent faithfully the pronunciation of the five contrastive vowel sounds. In Manobo the front vowel

is always written *i*; the back vowel is always written *o*. The symbol *u* is reserved for the high central vowel.

### 1.3 Stress

In the following examples, stress is marked by an acute accent (´) over the vowel of the stressed syllable.

1) Stress usually occurs on the next to last syllable of words: *báso*, *migbása*, *medáet*, *mengábat*, *menenóo*, *medáma*.

2) For words in which the next to last vowel is *e* and the last vowel is other than *e*, stress occurs on the last syllable: *begás*, *lekát*, *etebáy*, *benál*, *binelesán*.

3) For words in which the last two vowels are both *e*, stress occurs on the next to last syllable: *déleg*, *bénget*, *isélem*, *minéles*.

4) A few words, contrary to the above rules, occur with stress on the last syllable: *edén*, *sinú*, *ontô*, *ekéd*, *ikâ*, *olô*, *pedén*.

### 1.4 Length

Length has a pattern similar to that of stress. In the following examples, length is marked by a colon (:) following the lengthened vowel or consonant.

1) Length usually occurs on the vowel of the next to last syllable of the last word before a pause.

*Wedad dini so nesa:yo.*  
*Timolò aw dimo:ton.*

2) If, in the last word before a pause, the next to last vowel is *e* and the last vowel is other than *e*, no lengthening occurs.

*Kinità ko se bekesan.  
Ontò mebegat.*

3) If, in the last word before a pause, the last two vowels are both *e*, the consonant between the vowels is lengthened; if there are two consonants between the vowels, the first consonant is lengthened.

*Nesayo se wedad ineneng:en.  
Nepela so meben:ed.  
Ibeg din lomem:lem.  
Nebelà so pinek:pek.*

### 1.5 Intonation

The last word of a sentence is the most important intonationally. In normal speech, high pitch tends to occur on the stressed syllable of the last word of a sentence, mid pitch occurs on words and syllables before the high pitch, and low pitch occurs on the syllable after the high pitch. In section 3.3 the intonation patterns of statements and questions are contrasted and illustrated.

Additional details of the Manobo sound system are described in Appendix A.