

2. Inventory of Symbols

Tausug does not have a highly complicated sound system as do some languages of the world. It has only three vowel phonemes, /a/, /i/, and /u/ (a fact which undoubtedly facilitated the adoption by the early people of Sulu of the Arabic, or Jawi, script, or "*sulat Sūg*," as the Tausug call it) and 19 consonant phonemes distributed in basic syllable patterns which, except in instances involving semivowels, permit consonant clusters only at syllable boundaries. The 19 segmental consonants are displayed in the phoneme chart below:

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops					
voiceless	p	t		k	ʔ
voiced	b	d		g	
Fricative					h
Nasals	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
Affricates					
voiceless			ʃ		
voiced			ʒ		
Sibilant		s			
Lateral		l			
Vibrant		r			
Semivowels	w		y		

Chart 1 Consonantal Phonemes of Tausug

In the practical orthography used in this dictionary, the above phonemes are written just as they appear in the chart except for ʔ, ŋ, ɲ, ʃ, and ʒ. The glottal stop is symbolized in intervocalic position by the absence of any other symbol, as in *liug* "neck," *pais* "skin," and *laung* "quotative." Elsewhere it is indicated by an apostrophe, as in *kura'* "horse," *ta'ping* "jaw," and *mag'usiba'* "to despoil." The alveopalatal nasal is written *ny*, as in *dunya* "world," and the velar nasal is written *ng*, as in *patung* "bamboo." The voiceless alveolar palatal affricate is written *ch*, as in *bichara* "to speak," and the voiced alveopalatal affricate is written *j*, as in *janap* "a kind of working bolo."

3. The Symbolization of Length

There is also a phoneme of length with both vowels and consonants. With vowels, it is symbolized by a macron written above the vowel, as in *īpun* "slave," *mūs* "borrow," and *kakās* "rake." In the case of consonants, it is symbolized by writing an identical consonant, as in *gallang* "bracelet," *laggu'* "bigness, size," *sawwal* "split-leg pajama type trousers," and *Jayyari* "man's name."

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