Tausug (Suluk)

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Tausug (ISO code tsg) is an Austronesian language spoken on the island of Jolo in the southwestern Philippines. It is also found on other nearby islands in the southwestern part of the Philippines and in parts of Sabah, Malaysia, where it is called Suluk. The population of the Tausug in the Philippines is estimated at 900,000 (Gordon 2005) and the year 2000 population estimate of the Suluk in Sabah, Malaysia, is 150,000.¹ The following description is based on the variety spoken on Jolo. ‘The North Wind and the Sun’ text was translated from English into Tausug by Irene Hassan. Previous studies of Tausug phonology include Asmah (1978, 1983) and Hassan, Ashley & Ashley (1994). David Lao, age 62 at the time of the recording, born in Jolo, Philippines, was the reader for the Tausug words in this article. Due to difficult access into the language area, all audio recordings were obtained by Skype transmission.

Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Post-alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive &amp; affricate</td>
<td>p b ñ</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>(tʃ)ᵃ</td>
<td>(ʤ)³</td>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td>k g</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>j n</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flap</td>
<td>(r)ᵇ</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>s (z)ᶜ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lateral approximant</td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

ᵃ The voiceless post-alveolar fricative [tʃ] occurs only in borrowed words such as the Malay word, [biˈʃaɾa] ‘to speak’. Some Tausug speakers say [biˈsəɾa] instead.
ᵇ The phoneme /r/ has marginal phonemic status and would not be included here as a phoneme except that it also occurs in a few Malay loan words (e.g. [ˈmurid] ‘pupil’, [ˈkapir] ‘unbeliever’).
ᶜ The voiced alveolar fricative [z] occurs only in borrowed words such as the Arabic word, [ˈzabur] ‘holy book of David’.

¹ This estimate is based on an unpublished language survey conducted by one of the authors, Soderberg. The Sabah Malaysia State Culture Board asked Soderberg and five other individuals to perform a language survey during 1998–2000. This population estimate was obtained during that survey.
Tausug has some examples of consonant gemination at syllable boundaries, e.g. 
\[ \text{nagkukumus} \] ['naŋkʊkʊmʊs] ‘to cover someone’, and \[ \text{mattan} \] ['maʈan] ‘surely, truly’. Also, when the velar consonant becomes a geminate at syllable boundaries, there is free variation as follows: \[ \text{pagga} \] ['paŋɡa] ~ ['paŋkə] ‘whereas’.

All plosives are unreleased in syllable-final position, e.g. \[ \text{atup} \] ['atʊp] ‘roof’, \[ \text{taub} \] ['taʔub] ‘high tide’, \[ \text{langit} \] ['laŋjit] ‘sky’, \[ \text{ud} \] ['ʔud] ‘maggot’, \[ \text{tuktu}k \] ['tuʔtuʔ] ‘forehead’, \[ \text{balig} \] ['baŋɡ] ‘crooked’. The voiceless plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ are unaspirated. The voiced plosives /b/ and /g/ are sometimes realized as non-sibilant fricatives in intervocalic position, e.g. \[ \text{abagah} \] ['ʔaŋɡ] ~ ['ʔaŋɡ] ‘shoulder’, and \[ \text{tubu} \] ['tuɓu] ~ ['tuʔu] ‘sugarcane’. This is often the case between identical vowels. The non-sibilant fricatives were more noticeable with Tausug speakers from remote villages. The voiced plosives were more noticeable with Tausug speakers from urban areas.

The voiceless affricate [tʃ], as in [bi'tʃara] ‘to speak’, only occurs word medially. Depending on the speaker’s isolect, some pronounce this sound as a lengthened sibilant [ss]. Others pronounce it as a stop followed by a sibilant [ts]. But it is most commonly pronounced as a voiceless affricate [tʃ].

The [ɾ]-sound is realized as a flap when it occurs as an allophone of /d/. This phenomenon occurs in the intervocalic position both within single words and across word boundaries. For example, the word \[ \text{ud} \] ‘worm’ becomes ['urun] ‘to become infested with worms’. The word \[ \text{dayaw} \] ‘goodness’ becomes [ma'rayaw] ‘to have the quality of goodness’. The phrase \[ \text{duwa di duwa duum} \] ‘two here two there’ becomes ['duwa ri ruwa ruʔun].

When [ɾ] occurs as a phoneme, not as an allophone of /d/, it is manifested as a flap. There is also some free variation between the [ɾ] and the alveolar lateral approximant [l] (e.g. \[ \text{parman} \] ['paɾman] ~ ['paɾlan] ‘word’, \[ \text{sarta} \] ['sarʈaʔ] ~ ['saɾʈaʔ] ‘simultaneously’, \[ \text{sarsi}la \] ['sarʃi] ~ ['salʃi] ‘genealogy’). The alveolar flap [ɾ] is more commonly used by urban speakers of Tausug. The alveolar lateral approximant [l] is more commonly used by the village speakers of Tausug. The phoneme /ɾ/ has marginal phonemic status and would not be included here as a phoneme except that it also occurs in a few loan words from Malay (e.g. \[ \text{murid} \] ['murid] ‘pupil, follower’, \[ \text{kapir} \] ['kapir] ‘infidel or unbeliever’).
Vowels
Tausug has three vowel phonemes, /a/, /i/, and /u/. Like other Philippine languages with small vowel systems, /i/ and /u/ in Tausug demonstrate a range in vowel height, e.g. *bola* [ˈbola] ~ [ˈbula] ‘ball’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>ㅐ</td>
<td>ʊ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
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<td>ㅏ</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>ㅏ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

i  ‘pihak’ ‘tribe, clan’
a  ‘pakaw’ ‘thick covering’
u  ‘pukal’ ‘richness (of food)’

Stress
Stress in Tausug is not phonemic and falls on the penultimate syllable of two syllable words as is shown below.

ˈtubu  ‘sugarcane’
ˈsimud  ‘mouth’

In three-syllable words, stress again falls primarily on the penultimate syllable except in certain loan words, in which the stress pattern follows the stress pattern of the source language, as in [ˈsaj.an.ʦi] ‘scientist’.

There are other cases of exceptions to the penultimate stress rule due to certain affixation and word compounding as is indicated in the transcription of the recorded passage below.

Phonetic transcription of recorded passage
in ˈpasal sin ˈhanin ˈutṭara? ˈiβan sin ˈsuga
manˈdʒari | hamˈbuːk ‘adlaw naqˈtuk in ˈhanin ˈutṭara? ˈiβan ˈsuga | paqˈkita? ˈnila sin
hamˈbuːk ˈtaʔu miaˈmanaw | naqkuˈkummuːs sin haʃul maˈrakmul | naqˈtuk ˈsilu bɑŋ
hiˈsju in makuˈsuq haˈruwa ˈsila | ˈlaʔun niˈla | hiˈsjuˈsju in makaˈluɡus ha ˈtaʔu jaˈun
maqˈiːɡ sin ˈhaʃul niˈja maˈrakmul | na | ˈsja in makuˈsuq | saˈkali hiˈmujuŋ na
makuˈsuq in ˈhanin ˈutṭara? ˈsalawa? da iˈniːɡ sin ˈtaʔuˈjaʔun in ˈhaʃul niˈja
maˈrakmul | ˈgammaˈjan | naqˈkummuːs na ˈtuʔudsja | paqɡa ˈmaqkuˈsuq in ˈhanin
ˈutṭara? ˈpaqɡa biˈhadtu | iˈmuˈduŋ na in ˈhanin ˈutṭara? ˈna | siˈmuˈbli na in ˈsuga |
paqˈsilak sin ˈsuya | piˈjaʃu | na in ˈtaʔuˈjaʔun | ˈsarta? ˈmaqtuˈniˈja iˈniːɡ in ˈhaʃul niˈja
maˈrakmul | ˈhaŋkan naˈŋaku na in ˈhanin ˈutṭara? sin diˈjaʔuɡ sja | ˈiβan ˈmaṭṭan na sin
in ˈsuga makuˈsuq dajnˈkaŋia

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References


