The Phonology of Hiligaynon

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Abstract
There are 175 languages in the 7000+ islands that make up the Philippines. Hiligaynon is the fourth largest language spoken on the islands. The sound inventory of Hiligaynon has 22 phonemes, which include 17 consonants and 5 vowels. Contact with Spanish, English, and neighboring Filipino languages (mostly Cebuano, Tagalog, Kinaray-a, Aklanon) has influenced Hiligaynon resulting in many loanwords entering the lexical inventory of speakers of Hiligaynon. Although these loanwords contain sounds not native to Hiligaynon, most of them have assimilated to match the phonology of Hiligaynon. An example of this assimilation is seen in loanwords containing the labiodental fricatives [f] and [v] being pronounced with the biliabial stops [p] and [b] instead. This presentation identifies the phonology of modern Hiligaynon by briefly comparing key features of its sound system to that of other languages found in the Philippines. Morphophonemic rules will identify some of the word-formation processes that are influenced by the language’s phonology. The aim of this presentation is to clarify some of the phonological features of the language since an accurate description of the language is not yet available.

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The Phonology of Hiligaynon (Ilongo)

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Introduction

Hiligaynon
- Spoken in the central region of the Philippines
- 5th most widely spoken language among Filipinos
- Linguistic literature on the language is sparse

Why I am Interested
- I lived in the Philippines and learned Hiligaynon
- Lots of language contact and yet still distinct features are present
- Document the phonology language further
- Understand specific features of the language that has not been identified

The Philippines
- The Philippines are made up of 7,107 islands
- Land mass is about the size of Nevada
- There are 170 other languages spoken in the Philippines
- There are 105.13 million speakers of languages that come from the Philippines with: 25 million speakers of Filipino, 21.5 million speakers of Tagalog, 15.6 million speakers of Cebuano, 6.92 million speakers of Ilocano, 5.77 million speakers of Hiligaynon with 30.14 million speak the rest of 166 languages. 

The Phonemic Inventory

There are 22 distinct phonemes in Hiligaynon: 17 consonant phonemes and 5 vowel phonemes. When comparing Hiligaynon with English we find similarities in how many stops and nasals there are and the differences in how few fricatives there are in Hiligaynon. Hiligaynon has not been influenced by this phenomenon due to colonization, other languages have also influenced Hiligaynon. The numbering system in Hiligaynon shows Spanish influence.

(3) Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language (IPA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiligaynon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cebuano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waray-Waray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilocano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) Vowels and Diphthongs

- Labiodental Fricatives are replaced with Bilabial Plosives
- Influence from Spain and America
- /i/ acts as a consonant
- Hard for non-natives to recognize word-finally:
  - [manok] vs. [manog]
- /j/ and /w/ are not found in the final position of words
- Surface as the vowels [j], [w], and [u]

Selected Morphophonemic Rules

 Morphophonemic rules determine the way certain sounds are pronounced in different word formation processes.

(10) Stressed Vowel Deletion Rule

- [stressed] objective focus is to be in future tense (or any other suffix that causes stress to shift)
- /e/ + [-nasal] = /e/ (e.g. paN or maN 'to do something')

(11) Nasal Place Assimilation Rule

- [nasal] affix for to do read used for reading

A nasal is assimilated in place to the following consonant when the allomorphs [wa] or [wa] 'to do something' are placed before a root word.

(12) Nasalized Alveolar Stop Rule

Word-initial alveolar stops become nasalized when the preceding affix ends in a nasal.

Conclusion

Hiligaynon is in a unique position. With so many different languages influencing the development of Hiligaynon, it still keeps key attributes that natives are able to identify as distinct to that language. Further research and documentation will identify additional unique features of Hiligaynon and allow the language to be accurately described and analyzed linguistically.