

YAREBA PHONEMES¹

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0. Introduction

Yareba is a Papuan language spoken by some 750 people living in the middle Musa Valley 40 air miles southwest of Wanigela and 80 air miles northeast of Port Moresby. The Yarebas live in small villages made up of family clans. There are 18 villages in all, scattered along or near the Musa River, from Ubo on the east to Musia on the west.

1. Consonants1.1 Inventory

There are 13 consonant phonemes in Yareba. Stops /b d t g k/ contrast at three points of articulation: bilabial, alveolar and velar. Fricatives /f j s/ contrast at two points: bilabial and alveolar. Both stops and fricatives display a voiced-voiceless contrast but neither have this contrast in the bilabial position. The fricatives show a further secondary contrast between affricate and grooved fricative in the alveolar position. Two nasals: bilabial /m/ and alveolar /n/, and three liquids: /w y r/

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complete the consonant inventory.

CHART 1

Contrastive Features of Consonant Phonemes

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Velar
Stops: vd. vl.	b	d t	g k
Fricatives: vd. vl.	f	j s	
Nasals	m	n	
Liquids: Flap Semi-Vowels	w	r y	

1.2 Description of Consonants

- /b/, /d/ and /g/ are voiced unaspirated stops, bilabial [b], alveolar [d] and velar [g] respectively.
- /t/ and /k/ are voiceless aspirated stops, alveolar [t^h] and velar [k^h] respectively.
- /f/ is a voiceless bilabial fricative [p].
- /j/ is a voiced alveolar affricate [dz] fluctuating with an alveopalatal affricate [dž] and an alveolar grooved fricative [z].
- /s/ is a voiceless alveolar grooved fricative [s].
- /m/ and /n/ are voiced bilabial and alveolar nasals [m] and [n] respectively.
- /r/ is a voiced alveolar flapped vibrant [ř] fluctuating with a lateral flap [l̥].
- /w/ is a voiced labial continuant with the following variants: a bilabial fricative [b] occurs contiguous to /i/ and /e/ and

fluctuates with a non-syllabic high back vocoid [w] between [a] and [ai]. The labiodental fricative [v] occurs elsewhere.

/y/ is a voiced non-syllabic high front vocoid with palatal friction.

1.3 Contrastive Pairs

/t/ : /d/	/'ita/	<u>they ate</u>	/'ida/	<u>here, take it</u>
/t/ : /s/	/'ta/	<u>you bathe</u>	/'sa/	<u>you throw</u>
/d/ : /r/	/i'do/	<u>to agree</u>	/i'ra/	<u>medicine</u>
/d/ : /j/	/'dari/	<u>change places</u>	/'jari/	<u>a kind of vine</u>
/b/ : /w/	/'bia/	<u>footprint</u>	/'wia/	<u>mat, you say</u>
/k/ : /g/	/'egi/	<u>animal</u>	/'eki/	<u>ankle</u>
/m/ : /n/	/'buna/	<u>drum</u>	/'buna/	<u>clever</u>

1.4 Interpretation

Non-syllabic high vocoids [y] and [w] are interpreted as consonants. Labialised consonants occur only preceding stressed vowels /i/, /e/ and /a/, and are interpreted as sequences of consonant and high back vowel /u/, e.g. ['k^wit^ha] /ku'ita/ baby; ['f^wesi] /fu'esi/ woman's name; [bu'b^wida] /bubu'ida/ ceremony; ['f^wasi] /fu'asi/ name of river; ['m^wina] /mu'ina/ star.

2. Vowels

Five vowels /i e a u o/ show contrast as indicated in Chart 2.

CHART 2Contrastive Features of Vowel Phonemes

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Low	e	a	o

2.1 Description of Vowels

/i/ is a high close front unrounded vocoid [i].

/e/ is a mid open front unrounded vocoid [ɛ].

/a/ is a central unrounded vocoid with the following allophones: [a], a low open vocoid, tending to occur in stressed syllables, and [ʌ], a mid open vocoid, tending to occur in unstressed syllables.

/o/ is a low close back rounded vocoid [ɔ].

/u/ is a high close back rounded vocoid [u].

2.2 Contrastive Pairs

Unstressed syllables:

/i/ : /e/	/'tofi/	<u>to dip</u>	/'tofe/	<u>tail of a fish</u>
/a/ : /o/	/'sika/	<u>red ant</u>	/'siko/	<u>crane</u>
/o/ : /u/	/'wido/	<u>whistle</u>	/'widu/	<u>to tie</u>

Stressed syllables:

/i/ : /e/	/'ima/	<u>I will eat</u>	/'eme/	<u>man</u>
	/'ema/	<u>I will see</u>		
/a/ : /o/	/'gana/	<u>blue and red parrot</u>	/'gona/	<u>calf of leg</u>
/o/ : /u/	/'boma/	<u>not good</u>	/'buma/	<u>drum</u>

3. Stress

Contrastive stress occurs on the first or second syllable of stems. The following examples demonstrate these contrasts on two syllable words.

/'ema/	<u>I will see</u>	/e'ma/	<u>they</u>
/'uta/	<u>they did</u>	/u'ta/	<u>he is doing</u>
/'ina/	<u>white</u>	/i'na/	<u>fire</u>
/'yana/	<u>we are</u>	/ya'na/	<u>spear it!</u>

4. Syllable Construction

The syllable is the primary unit of distribution of Yareba phonemes. A syllable may consist of a simple vowel nucleus V; a complex vowel nucleus VV; or either of these with a consonant onset, CV and CVV. All syllables are open. A word consists of from one to seven of these basic syllable types.

4.1 Syllable Sequences

Of the 16 possible syllable sequences, the following do not seem to occur: V + VV, VV + VV, VV + CVV, and CVV + VV.

CHART 3

Syllable Sequences

	V	VV	CV	CVV
V	X	X	X	X
VV	X		X	
CV	X	X	X	X
CVV	X		X	X

V + V

/'ia/

you eat

/'ua/

you do it

V + CV	/i'na/	<u>fire</u>	/'ome/	<u>ear</u>
V + CVV	/a'nimau/	<u>I will go eat</u>	/u'bei/	<u>thumb</u>
VV + V	/'aia/	<u>you sleep</u>	/'aua/	<u>you scratch</u>
VV + CV	/'eido/	<u>right here</u>	/'aiye/	<u>friend</u>
CV + V	/mo'a/	<u>build a fire</u>	/'kua/	<u>dog</u>
CV + VV	/go'ai/	<u>design</u>	/mo'au/	<u>large fish</u>
CV + CV	/ko'wa/	<u>sun</u>	/'daba/	<u>road</u>
CV + CVV	/ta'bai/	<u>snake</u>	/sa'kai/	<u>sand</u>
CVV + V	/'nau/	<u>he heard</u>	/'woua/	<u>you carry</u>
CVV + CV	/go'baido/	<u>a boy's name</u>	/mai'dani/	<u>mountain</u>
CVV + CVV	/'wouwou/	<u>blister</u>	/'nainau/	<u>my mother-in-law</u>

4.2 Vowel Sequences in One Syllable

CHART 4

One-Syllable Vowel Sequences

	a	e	i	o	u
a			X		X
e			X		X
i					
o			X		X
u					

There is no occurrence of lengthened or doubled like-vowels. An unstressed high vocoid following /a/, /e/, /o/ is non-syllabic. If a high vocoid is stressed it is considered a syllabic. Examples are:

/u'bei/	<u>thumb</u>	/ke'una/	<u>sore on bottom of foot</u>
/ta'bai/	<u>snake</u>	/be'utasu/	<u>puddle</u>
/'goi/	<u>knock</u>	/e'tuaido/	<u>up there</u>
/yau'binu/	<u>you sat</u>	/ke'reu/	<u>crooked (type of walking)</u>
/be'beu/	<u>crooked (adj.)</u>		