

SUENA PHONOLOGY

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1. Phonemes.
2. Syllables.
3. Stress-Tone Patterns.
4. Intonational Patterns.

1. PHONEMES

1.1. OUTLINE OF SUENA¹ PHONEMES

CONSONANTS

	Labial	Dental & Alveolar	Alveo-Palatal	Velar
Obstruents				
vl.	p	t	s	k
vd.	b	d	dz	g
flapped		r		
Resonants	w		y	
Nasals	m	n		

VOWELS

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Low	e	a	o

1.2. DESCRIPTION OF CONTRASTIVE FEATURES

There is contrast in manner of articulation between voiced, voiceless, and flapped obstruents, resonants, and nasals. Obstruents contrast as to

labial, dental and alveolar, alveo-palatal, and velar points of articulation. Resonants contrast as to labial and alveo-palatal. Nasals contrast as to bilabial and alveolar points of articulation. Vowels contrast as to front, central and back as well as high and low tongue positions.

1.3. DESCRIPTION OF PHONEMES

1.3.1. Consonants

- /p/ [p^h] voiceless bilabial aspirated stop.
 /t/ [t^h] voiceless interdental aspirated stop.
 /s/ [s] voiceless alveolar fricative.
 /k/ [k^h] voiceless velar aspirated stop.
 /b/ [b] voiced bilabial stop.
 /d/ [d] voiced alveolar stop.
 /dz/ [dz] voiced alveolar affricate.
 /g/ [g] voiced velar stop.
 /m/ [m] voiced bilabial nasal.
 /n/ [n] voiced alveolar nasal.
 /w/ [w] voiced high close back non-syllabic vocoid, occurs before
 u, o, a.
 [ɸ] voiced high close front flat fricative, occurs before i, e.
 /y/ [y] voiced alveo-palatal non-syllabic vocoid.
 /r/ [ɾ] voiced alveolar flapped vibrant, occurs word medial only.²

/pama/	[pama]	<i>hill</i>	/wara/	[wara]	<i>jungle</i>
/bama/	[bama]	<i>woman</i>	/yara/	[yara]	<i>Pleiades</i>
/tama/	[tama]	<i>skin</i>	/ititi/	[ititi]	<i>shadow</i>
/dama/	[dama]	<i>dew</i>	/itiri/	[itiri]	<i>startled</i>
/sara/	[sara]	<i>bamboo</i>	/kaya/	[kaya]	<i>small knife</i>
/dzama/	[dzama]	<i>sweet odour</i>	/gaya/	[gaya]	<i>frog</i>
/mama/	[mama]	<i>father</i>	/didikai/	[didikai]	<i>families</i>
/nama/	[nama]	<i>I</i>	/dirina/	[dirina]	<i>thorn</i>

1.3.2. Vowels

- /i/ [i] high close front unrounded voiced vocoid.
 /e/ [e] mid close front unrounded voiced vocoid.
 /a/ [a] low open central unrounded voiced vocoid.

/o/ [o] mid close back rounded voiced vocoid.
 /u/ [u] high close back rounded voiced vocoid.
 /ewa/ [ewa] *here*
 /awa/ [awa] *there (close)*
 /owa/ [owa] *there (distant)*
 /iwo/ [iwo] *turtle*
 /uwi/ [ubi] *firefly*

Free fluctuation of full phonemes occurs in the following words:

/s/ ~ /dz/	/susawia/	<i>he is going</i>
	/sudzawia/	<i>he is going</i>
/m/ ~ /p/	/potitinoya/	<i>he is putting</i>
	/motitinoya/	<i>he is putting</i>

2. SYLLABLES

A Suena syllable is composed of one vowel with optional consonant onset. There are two syllable patterns, V and CV.³

/demira/	<i>mosquito</i>
/uso/	<i>coconut</i>
/kiaka/	<i>small</i>
/bua/	<i>garden</i>

All possible combinations of consonants and vowels within the syllable have been noted except /yi/.

Every syllable is approximately the same length, except for intonational lengthenings for special effects.

3. STRESS-TONE PATTERNS

The materials presented in this section and in section 4 need considerably more work, but are presented here for the benefit of those interested.

3.1. STRESS

Stress occurs on the penult of poly-syllabic noun stems. Stress on verbs and affixed nouns has yet to be studied.

3.2. TONE

Pitch on words of more than three syllables has yet to be examined, but in a corpus of over 3000 words only the following contrastive

word-tone patterns have been noted for words of up to three syllables:

One syllable. High tone contrasts with low tone.

/dzá/ [dzá] *Areca nut*

/dza/ [dzà] *mushroom*

Two syllables. High tone on the first syllable, low tone on the second contrasts with mid tone on the first syllable and low tone on the second.

/káyo/ [káyò] *death sorcery*

/kayo/ [kāyò] *flying squirrel*

Three syllables. High tone on second syllable contrasts with high tone on the first syllable. These two patterns are equally frequent in occurrence.

/gamía/ [gāmíà] *he bit*

/gámia/ [gámīà] *he pulled up*

To date, 26 pairs of words identical except for tone have been discovered.

3.3. DISTRIBUTION

3.3.1. Distribution of Phonemes in Word

CONSONANTS: any consonant may occur in an initial, medial, or final syllable, except that /r/ never occurs initially.

VOWELS: any vowel may occur word initial, medial or final. In charting VC sequences across syllable boundaries, all possible forms were found except -iy-. In charting VV sequences all possible forms were found except ee and oo. The following VVV sequences were found:

iao /niao/ *fire*

uai /nuai/ *life*

eai /keai/ *to tear*

oia /poia/ *bandana*

eia /keiawai/ *to come up*

aia /saia/ *it is cooked*


3.3.2. Distribution of Syllables in Word

Both V and CV syllables may occur word initial, word medial, or word final.

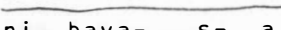
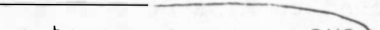
4. INTONATIONAL PATTERNS

There are four types of intonation:



1. Falling intonation throughout a pause group signals finality.


 ni bayamuno-s- a awa ⁴ 'you will go'
 you will go-you-ind. s.m.

2. Level intonation signals non-finality or incompleteness, and is followed by a slight final drop in pitch.


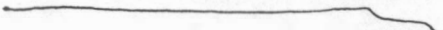

 ni baya- s- a
 you will go-you-ind. 'when you go then

 na bayamuno-n-a awa 'I will go'
 I will go- I-ind. s.m.

3. Final rise and fall intonation signals that a Yes-No response is anticipated.


 bayamuno-s-ita 'will you go?'
 will go-you-Q

 bayamuno-s- a 'will you go?'
 will go-you-ind.

Note that in the first example there is a morphemic signal as well as an intonation, whereas in the second example, the anticipated response is indicated only by intonation.

4. A mid rise and final fall signals conditional.


 ni bayamuno-s- a awa,
 you will go-you-ind. s.m. 'if you go, I will

 na ni gamuno- n-a awa see you'
 I you will see-I-ind. s.m.

N O T E S

1. The Suena language is spoken by approximately 1400 people living along the coast near the Morobe Patrol Post in the Morobe District of New Guinea. Data for this paper was compiled over a three year period while the author was living in the village of Bosadi. Many informants were used in collecting the data. I am indebted to Miss Dorothy James, S.I.L., for invaluable assistance in writing this paper.

2. A small minority of speakers have a flapped lateral [ɻ] instead of the flapped vibrant [ʀ].

It might be possible to postulate [ʀ] as a submember of /d/ phoneme, since although there are several occurrences of medial [d], nearly every occurrence is subject to question whether or not it is one word or a close-knit phrase.

One word:

/bosadi/ [bosadi] The name of a village; a compound made from Bosa-paira and Digutu, two villages which merged under Local Government Council.

/binandere/ [binandere] The name of the related language group from which the Suenas originally migrated. This language has prenasalized stops.

/didikai/ [didikai] 'families', a reduplication of dikai 'relative'.

/didinoya/ 'he ties up' There seems to be no explanation for this medial [d].

Close-knit phrases:

/da da/	[dada]	<i>one by one</i>
/bama diri/	[bamadiri]	<i>young girl</i>
/wana da/	[wanada]	<i>five (lit. 'one hand')</i>
/dao dao wai/	[daodaowai]	<i>soft</i>
/dau dau wai/	[daudauwai]	<i>senile</i>

We have analyzed [r] and [d] as separate phonemes on the basis of:

1. the occurrence of medial [d] in *didinoya* 'he ties up' and its related conjugation, which is a frequent vocabulary item.

2. the reaction when we tried an orthography using [r] symbolized as d. Only confusion resulted.

3. There are no closed syllables, but in rapid speech the vowel /u/ is sometimes dropped following the consonant /m/.

/bamu/ [bam] *big*
 /bamubake/ [bambake] *very big*
 /bamubamu/ [bambam] *all things*

Except for situations such as the above, prenasalized stops are found only in borrowed or very ancient forms:

Binandere *name of a related language*
 Namandaira *name of original village c.1900*
 Mainambaira *name of a place on the beach.*

4. The abbreviations ind., s.m., and Q indicate Indicative Mood, Sentence Marking Particle, and Question morpheme respectively.

