

Phonemic consonants of Degema

Degema has twenty-four phonemic consonants as follows: /m, n, ɲ, ŋ, ŋ^w, p, b, t, d, k, g, kp, gb, ɓ, ɗ, ɗɓ*, r, f, β**, s, h, l, j, w/.

Contrast between pairs of the consonants is shown below with minimal pairs:

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| m | mó | '(of sun) shine' |
| n | nó | 'hit' |
| ɲ | ɲón | 'put' |
| ŋ | ŋón | 'snore' |
| ŋ^w | ŋ ^w áɲ | 'count' |
| **ɲ | ɲáɲ | 'paddle (a canoe)' |
| p | pá | 'threaten' |
| b | bá | 'peel (fruit)' |
| t | tá | 'go' |
| d | dá | 'smear' |
| k | kán | 'pinch' |
| g | gán | '(of sun) shine brilliantly' |
| kp | kpá | 'weave' |
| gb | gbá | 'arrange (esp. periwinkles) on a special stick before roasting' |
| ɓ | ɓé | 'peel (yam, cocoyam, etc.)' |
| ɗ | ɗé | 'buy' |
| r | rùβé | 'pierce' |
| ɗɓ | ɗɓùβé | 'fetch (water)' |
| f | fá | 'put (load) in a canoe or vehicle' |
| β | βá | 'butcher' |
| s | sá | 'kick' |
| h | há | 'open (esp. mouth)' |
| l | lá | 'crawl' |
| j | jów | 'swim' |
| w | wów | '(of fruit) become soft' |

*Degema Town (Atala) speakers pronounce this consonant as [z], while Usokun speakers pronounce it as [dʒ].

**Degema Town speakers pronounce this consonant as [v], while Usokun speakers pronounce it as [β].

***Repeated consonant

These consonants are put in a chart as shown below:

| Place => Manner↓ | labial | alveolar | palatal | velar | labial(ised) velar/glottal |
|----------------------------|--------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------------------|
| S nasal | m | n | ɲ | ŋ | ŋ ^w |
| T plosive/ affricate | p b | t d | dʒ | k g | kp gb |
| P implosive | ɓ | ɗ | | | |
| S trill | | r | | | |
| FRICATIVE | f β | s | | | h |
| APPROXIMANT | | l | j | | w |

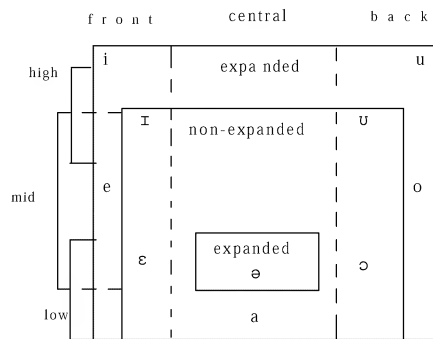
The Consonant and vowel inventories of Degema, based on the Usokun variety, were submitted by Ethelbert E. KARI.

Phonemic vowels of Degema

Degema has ten phonemic vowels as follows: /i, ɪ, e, ε, a, ə, ɔ, o, ʊ, u/.

The ten vowels are divided into two sets of five each – *expanded* and *non-expanded* – on the basis of the size of the pharynx. Expanded vowels are produced with the root of the tongue pushed forward, accompanied by a simultaneous lowering of the larynx, while non-expanded vowels are produced with the root of the tongue pulled backwards with a simultaneous raising of the pharynx.

The two sets of vowels are shown in the chart below:



Both sets of vowels do not co-occur in a simple word. Expanded vowels go together, and non-expanded vowels also go together. In other words, there is vowel harmony in a simple word, as follows:

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---------|--------------|
| 1. | i | ɿsɛn | 'fish' (n.) |
| 2. | ɪ | ɪmám | 'animals' |
| 3. | e | ɛ̀gùgúm | 'anthill' |
| 4. | ε | ɛ̀ðóɲ | 'goat' |
| 5. | a | àkó | 'canoes' |
| 6. | ə | é'dó | 'river' |
| 7. | ɔ | ðbílàɲ | 'plantain' |
| 8. | o | ððilí | 'cobra' |
| 9. | ʊ | ʊ'bé | 'snare' (n.) |
| 10. | u | ùkpré | 'year' |