

The sound system of Abun is relatively simple and consists of 20 consonants, 5 simple vowels and seven diphthongs. Also there are three distinct tones, high/rising, low and falling. The inventory of phonemic consonants comprises plosives, including prenasalised voiced plosives at four points of articulation (with the exception of *c*, which is used in free variation with the palatal fricative *sy*), and nasals, fricatives and glides at three points of articulation. Voicing contrast for plosives is only found in the onset of stressed syllables. Thus, Abun has 20 consonants: *p*, *b*, *t*, *d*, *j*, *k*, *g*, *mb*, *nd*, *nj*, *ngg*, *m*, *n*, *ny*, *f*, *s*, *sy*, *w*, *r*, and *y*; five phonemic vowels, *i*, *e*, *a*, *o*, *u*, and seven complex syllable peaks (diphthongs): *ai*, *au*, *ei*, *eu*, *oi*, *ou* and *ui*.

Tone in Abun has a low functional load and may be disappearing as a useful contrastive feature. There are very few minimal pairs in the same word class. Tone is used to indicate unspecified number plurality, for example, tone is used to differ between the singular and plural forms of the third person pronoun, in which '3PL' is /*án*/ with a rising tone, while '3SG' is /*an*/ with a low tone. It also distinguishes *ré* 'this, here' with a high pitch from the perfective marker (PERF) *re*, which has a low pitch.

Abun has a basically monosyllabic word structure. A sampling of a typical story reveals that about 80% of the words are monosyllabic, about 15% have two syllables and only 5% have three or more.

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