

# 1. Phonology

## 1.1. Consonants

Table I is a chart of the 24 consonantal phonemes of Dizi.

Table 1. The Consonants of Dizi

	t		k
	t'		k'
b	d		g
f	s	ʃ	
β	z	ʒ	
	ts'	c	c'
			j
m	n		
w	l, r	y	h

These phonemes have allophones as follows:

/s/ may be voiced optionally before a voiced stop or word finally:

[bàsɖλgò] or [bàzdλgò] 'he wants'

[k'ankàs] or [k'ankáz] PLURAL

unless /s/ is functioning as the object marker:

[aras] but not \*[araz] 'knife'

/z/, on the other hand, is never devoiced among native speakers of Dizi:

[kɔlɪz] but not \*[kɔlɪs] 'dry'

When /n/ occurs finally in certain dependent verb forms as part of the tense/aspect marker, it is sometimes realized as [ɖ], that is, as a nasalized voiced dental stop. It may be realized as [ɖ] also when /n/ is the marker for the first person singular and the first person plural of dependent verb forms.

/n̄ k'en bàsɖλgò/

[n̄ k'eɖ bàsɖλgò] or [ɖ k'eɖ bàsɖλgò]

'He wants me to work!'

/n šubn bàsdλgò/  
 [n šubn bàsdλgò] or [ã šubã bàsdλgò]  
 'He wants us to die.'

[ŋ] also occurs as an allophone of /n/, in free variation before /k/:

[k'ankàs] or [k'aŋkàs] PLURAL

or as a conditioned allophone following a vowel when /-n/ functions as the marker of the imperative:

[tàŋ] 'Give!' (note syllabic nasal: ŋ)

as opposed to

[kàtsŋ] 'Cook!'

## 1.2. Vowels

There are ten phonetic vowels in Dizi:

i		u
	ɪ	
e	ɛ	ə
	^	o
	a	

Six of these [i, e, a, ^, o, u], have distinct phonemic status. These vowel phonemes are realized as follows:

/i/ is usually realized as [i]. It is realized as [ɪ], however, if it occurs in an adjective:

[ts'anɪz] 'black'

or if it occurs within a verb stem and comes between two consonants on a non-High tone syllable:

[alɪno] 'I sat'

/e/ is usually realized as [e]; however, [ɛ] sometimes occurs word initially:

[ɛdu] or [edu] 'mouth'

or medially, where it sometimes alternates with [ə]:

[kɛbi] or [kəbi] 'bird'

A further alternant is [ɛ^], which is in between [e] and [ɛ]:

[yɛ^lù] 'sand'

I should point out, incidentally, that [ɛ] itself can contrast with [ɪ]:

[mdɛno] as opposed to [mdɪno]  
 'I am eating' 'I got eaten'

/a/ is always realized as [a].

/^/ is always realized as [^].

Word finally, /o/ is usually realized as [o]:

[k'eyo] 'he worked'

Between two consonants, /o/ is usually realized as [ɔ]:

[bɔrkul] 'to swim'

However, this pattern is sometimes reversed, as in:

[boŋɔ] 'to burn'

and the first person plural verb suffix is realized sometimes as [ɲno] and sometimes as [ɲno]. It is possible that this alternation may be a form of vowel harmony, but as yet, I have insufficient information.

/u/ is always realized as [u].

While [ə] occurs as one of the allophones of /e/, it is also used to break up clusters of three or more consonants belonging to three different (structural) syllables:

[ʃub.kno] as opposed to [ʃub.kə.ɲ.no]  
 'I am dying' 'we are dying'

Here, it would probably be better to consider [ə] as intrusive rather than phonemic.

### 1.3. Tone

Dizi is a register-type tone language with three levels of contrastive tone: Low (marked  $\grave{v}$ ), Mid (left unmarked:  $v$ ), and High (marked  $\acute{v}$ ). While tone functions both lexically and syntactically, its lexical function is relatively unimportant since there are very few pairs of words differentiated by tone alone: I have found one pair of verbs differentiated by tone in some constructions, for example, and five pairs of nouns and pronouns which are minimal pairs by lexical tone:

$\wedge i$  'ear' but  $\wedge i$  'water'  
 $\grave{n}$ -kianù 'my dog' but  $n$ -kianù 'our dog'

Tone is more important syntactically; in nouns, for example, tone marks possessive constructions, a very important function given the SOV word order of the language. To give just one example,

yaàbà klanàs sàgo.  
 man dog+OBJ he+saw  
 'The man saw the dog.'

contrasts with

yáàbà klànàs sàgo.  
 man's dog+OBJ he saw.  
 'He saw the man's dog.'

I discuss the role of tone in the morphology of the verb below, on pp. 385 ff.

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