

Phonology

Like other Tai languages, the phonological pattern of Saek is based on the syllable. Each syllable has distinctions in tone, initial (consonant or consonant cluster), nucleus (vowel or diphthong), and optional final consonant.

Tones. On open syllables (those ending with final vowel, semivowel, or nasal), Saek has six tones. In his earlier publication on Saek, Gedney identifies and describes these tones (1970). Here, pitch levels and contours based on the Chao 5-level pitch scale (Chao 1930) have been added to those descriptions:

- 1 - mid level, with rise on the end, 34: *pii*¹ 'year'
- 2 - low level, 11: *maa*² 'dog'
- 3 - mid, falling to low, with glottal constriction, 31: *rii*³ 'stream'
- 4 - high rising-falling, 454: *naa*⁴ 'ricefield'
- 5 - high falling, 52: *phii*⁵ 'older sibling'
- 6 - mid level, with slight fall, with glottal constriction: 32, *nii*⁶ 'this'

Consonants. Saek has the following consonant inventory:

	Labial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Palatal	Labiovelar	Velar	Glottal
Stops							
VI. unasp.	p		t	c		k	ʔ
VI. asp.	ph		th	ch		kh	
Vd.	b		d			(g)	
VI. spirants		f	s				h
Vd. spirant						ɣ	
Vd. nasals	m		n	ɲ		ŋ	
Vd. sonorants		v	l,r	y	w		

Vowels. Saek has nine vowels, each occurring long and short:

	Front		Back
		Unrounded	Rounded
High	i, ii	ɯ, ɯɯ	u, uu
Mid	e, ee	ɤ, ɤɤ	o, oo
Low	ɛ, ɛɛ	a, aa	ɔ, ɔɔ

William J. Gedney's

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