

7. PHONEME

Selepet has fifteen consonant phonemes: p, t, k, b, d, g, m, n, ŋ, w, y, s, h, l and r; and six vowel phonemes: i, e, a, â, o and u. The consonants contrast in manner of articulation as to voiceless and voiced stops, nasals, flat and grooved fricatives, lateral and vibrant. The stops and nasals contrast as to labial, dental and velar points of articulation. The flat fricatives contrast as to labial, alveolar and velar (including glottal) points of articulation. Vowels contrast as to high, mid and low tongue heights and front and back tongue positions. Allophonic variation is conditioned by occurrence of contiguous segments. An articulatory description of the allophones with their acoustical correlates is given in Appendix I.¹² Contrastive pairs illustrating phonemic contrasts are given in Appendix II.

7.1 CONSONANTS

The distribution of contoid phones is shown in Table A. The subscript [̚] indicates an unreleased or held lenis stop, and the subscript [̤] indicates non-syllabicity with vocoids and dental articulation with contoids. The spike fills of voiceless stops occurring in the initial position are longer than those of the phones occurring in the inter-vocalic positions and thus evidence greater aspiration. The phones [f] and [p] occur only rarely fluctuating with [p^h] word initially before high vowels i and u. The syllable final unreleased stops have no spike gap.

/pikyap/ [p^hiki̤ap̚], [p̤iki̤ap̚] or [fik̤i̤ap̚] 'It is full',¹³

/pui/ [p^hṳi̤] or [p̤ṳi̤] 'chicken'

/papato/ [p^hap^hat̤^ho] 'very big'

/takat/ [t̤^hak^hat̤^h] 'You came.'

/katap/ [k^hat̤^hap̚^j] 'potato'

TABLE A: CONSONANTAL ALLOPHONIC VARIATION

Phonemes	/p/	/t/	/k/	/b/	/d/	/g/	/m/	/n/	/ŋ/	/w/	/y/	/h/	/s/	/l/	/r/
Word initial	[p ^h] [f] [p]	[t ^h]	[k ^h]	[^m b] [b] [p]	[ⁿ d̥] [d̥] [t̥]	[^ŋ g] [g] [k]	[m]	[^ŋ]	[ŋ]	[w̥] [z ^y] [s ^y]	[i̥] [z ^y] [s ^y]	[h]	[s]	[l]	
Inter-vocalic	[p ^h]	[t ^h]	[k ^h]	[^m b]	[ⁿ d̥]	[^ŋ g]	[m]	[^ŋ]	[ŋ]	[b]	[i̥]	[g]	[s]	[l]	[r̥] [r̃]
Syllable final	[p]	[t̥]	[k̥]				[m]	[^ŋ]	[ŋ]						
Following consonants				[b] [p]	[d̥] [t̥]	[g] [k]	[m]	[^ŋ]	[ŋ] [ŋ<] [ñ]		[i̥] [s ^y] [z ^y] [s]				

The prenasalisation on the voiced stops in word initial position is weak and often absent. It has never been observed to constitute as much as one-half of the phones total length. This contrasts with the intervocalic position where the nasal portion of the phone may be as much as three times the length of the stop portion of the phone. The voiced stop phones tend toward voicelessness following voiceless stops and often reduce following homo-organic stops.¹⁴ The voiced stops exhibit rare occurrences of voiceless unaspirated stop phones in fluctuation in initial position.

/dakera/ [ⁿdak^heʔa], [d^hak^heʔa] or [t^hak^heʔa] 'grass'

/ga/ [^ŋga], [ga] or [ka] 'Come!'

/ekbom/ [e^hk^hbom] or [e^hk^hpom] 'I will see it.'

/dodâ/ [ⁿd^oⁿd^o] or [d^oⁿd^o] 'plenty'

/baga/ [^mba^ŋga] or [ba^ŋga] 'kind of breadfruit'

/gaguk/ [^ŋga^ŋguk] or [ga^ŋguk] 'kind of shrub (Zingiberaceae)'

The palatalised velar nasal [ŋ̣] occurs only following phones [ŋ̣] and [ɟ̣] and the alveopalatal nasal [ɲ̣] occurs fluctuating with [ŋ̣] following phone [ŋ̣].

/kutŋ̣/ [k^hut^hŋ̣̣e] 'his name'

/esenŋ̣/ [e^hse^hŋ̣̣e] or [e^hse^hŋ̣̣e] 'its leaf'

The phone [ɟ̣] occurs initially preceding back vowels and medially following stops and nasals. Phone [z^Y] occurs initially preceding front vowels and medially following stops and nasals. The phone [s^Y] fluctuates with phones [i], [z^Y] and rarely [s] following stops.¹⁵

/yune/ [ɟ̣une] 'this'

/yione/ [z^Yione] 'my maternal uncle (mother's brother)'

/ekyongoap/ [e^hk^hɟ̣oŋgoap] or [e^hk^hz^Yoŋgoap] 'He told them (pl.).'

/donyap/ [doŋɟ̣ap] or [doŋz^Yap] 'It broke.'

/katyeksap/ [k^hat^hɟ̣ɟ̣eksap], [k^hat^hz^Yeksap], [k^hat^hs^Yeksap] or

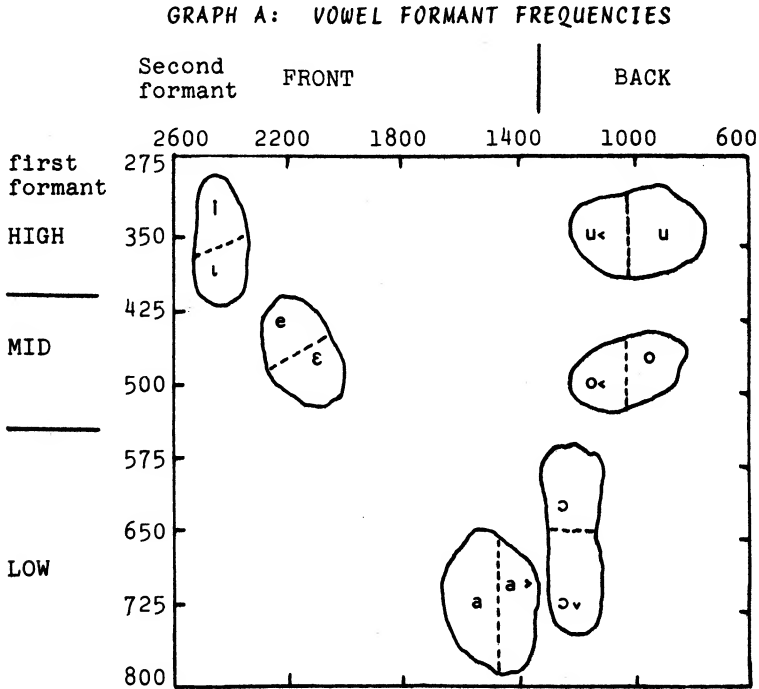
[k^haseksap] 'He dismissed them (pl.).'

The phone [ř] occurs only rarely fluctuating with phone [ṛ̌].

/porom/ [p^hořom] or [p^hoṛ̌om] 'Porom ancestral cult'

7.2 VOWELS

The six vowel phonemes are plotted on Graph A according to the frequencies of their first and second formants (given in cycles per second (cps.)). The phoneme target areas are enclosed by a solid line and allophonic variation is shown by internal broken lines. Articulatory designations of front, back, high, mid and low are also indicated.



The phone [ɪ] occurs before nasals and voiced prenasalised stops; phone [i] occurs fluctuating with phone [ɪ] and in other environments.

/gibaŋ/ [gɪ^mbaŋ] 'yellow'

/idup/ [ɪⁿdup] 'barricade'

/igep/ [ɪ^ogep] 'spear'

/pɪriap/ [p^hiɾiap] 'He washed it'

/ikiwe/ [ik^hiwe] 'Amboina Cuckoo-dove'

/gihitŋe/ [gigiŋ^oe] 'its root'

The phone [e] occurs before vowels, fricatives and liquids and word finally whereas phone [ɛ] occurs in other environments and fluctuating with [e] before liquids.

/meteâk/ [mɛt^hɛɔk] 'openly'

/kehetɲe/ [k^hɛɛɛɲe] 'egg, seed'

/dewutâ/ [ɖɛbuɔt^hɔ] 'sun'

/kabene/ [k^ha^mbɛɲe] 'my shoulder'

/emelan/ [ɛmɛlan] or [ɛmɛlan] 'in the house'

/tebe/ [t^hɛ^mbe] 'bow'

The phone [a>] occurs in the sequence [l-m] and phone [a] occurs elsewhere.

/kalam/ [k^hala>m] 'garden'

/kapam/ [k^hap^ham] 'stick'

/nak/ [nək] 'wood'

/asoap/ [asoap] 'It stuck.'

The phone [ɔ<] occurs between [l] and labials and the phone [ɔ] occurs in other environments.

/lâm/ [lɔ<m] 'hole'

/kâlâp/ [k^hɔlɔ<p] 'fire'

/kâdâtɲe/ [k^hɔⁿɖɔɲe] 'his back'

/bâlâɲe/ [bɔlɔɲe] 'his calf'

/ârok/ [ɔ^ʔrok] 'cucumber'

/âkâm/ [ɔk^hɔm] 'expectorating'

/gâit/ [gɔ<ɪt] 'You carry it!'

The phone [o<] occurs before dentals and phone [o] occurs in other environments.

/hobot/ [ho^mbo<t] 'wild sugar cane'

/ariwot/ [aribo<t] 'You may go!'

/asion/ [asion] 'sneeze'

/tosa/ [t^hosa] 'error'

The phone [u<] occurs before [ṭ] and phone [u] occurs in other environments.

/kaiput/ [k^hɔ̣|p^hu< ṭ] 'bead necklace'

/amutgen/ [amu< ṭgeṇ] 'underneath'

/keluŋe/ [k^helun̄e] 'its fat'

/use/ [use] 'sore'

/suem/ [suem] 'kind of wild sugar cane'

/duwi/ [dubi] 'kind of animal'

/gurumu/ [guʀumu] 'kind of tree (Moraceae Ficus adenosperma)'

8. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The twenty-one Selepet phonemes may be identified by seven distinctive features. These are tabulated in Table B. Abbreviations used are: cons. for consonantal/non-consonantal, voc. for vocalic/non-vocalic, inter. for interrupted/continuant, nas. for nasal/non-nasal, cpt. for compact/diffuse, gr. for grave/acute and ten. for tense/lax. The plus symbol indicates the occurrence of the first feature of a set; the minus symbol indicates the occurrence of the second feature of a set. Redundant features are not indicated.¹⁶

TABLE B:: SELEPET DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Phoneme	cons.	voc.	inter.	nas.	cpt.	gr.	ten.
p	+	-	+		-	+	+
t	+	-	+		-	-	+
k	+	-	+		+		+
b	+	-	+		-	+	-
d	+	-	+		-	-	-
g	+	-	+		+		-
m	+	-	-	+	-	+	
n	+	-	-	+	-	-	
ŋ	+	-	-	+	+		
w	+	-	-	-	-	+	
y	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
h	+	-	-	-	+		
s	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
l	+	+	-				
r	+	+	+				
i	-				-	-	+
e	-				-	-	-
a	-				+		-
â	-				+		+
o	-				-	+	-
u	-				-	+	+