

A TENTATIVE PHONEMIC STATEMENT
 in YIL
 in
 WEST SEPIK PROVINCE

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- 0 INTRODUCTION
- 1 OUTLINE OF PHONEMES
- 2 INTERPRETATION
- 3 DESCRIPTION OF PHONEMES
- 4 DISTRIBUTION
- 5 ORTHOGRAPHY
- 6 RESIDUE

0 INTRODUCTION

This paper is a tentative statement of the phonemes of the Yil language, which belongs to the Wapei-Palei Phylum in the Lumi Sub-province of the Sepik Province. The Yil language is spoken by approximately 2100 people who live in twelve main villages. This paper is based on a dictionary of approximately 900 words collected during residence in the village of Mampel, August-October 1974. Our chief helper was William Meriemia, age 16, standard 4 student in the Catholic Mission School at Yili and resident of Mampel. He is a fluent Pidgin speaker and knows some English. His older brother Moses was also helpful in giving texts and checking data. We are grateful for the consultant help given by Barry Irwin.

1 OUTLINE OF PHONEMES

1.1 Chart of Phonemes

Consonants

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Velar
Stops	p	t	k
Nasals	m	n	ŋ
Fricatives		s	g
Lateral		l	
Vibrant		r	
Semivowels			

	Front		Central	Back
	Unrounded	Rounded		
High	i	ü	ə	u
Low	e		a	o
Vowel Glides	/a ⁱ /	/a ^u /	/a ^ü /	/e ⁱ /

1.2 Contrastive Features

1.2.1 Consonants

There is a contrast in manner of articulation between stops, nasals, fricatives and semi-vowels. The stops and nasals contrast at labial, alveolar and velar points of articulation. Fricatives contrast at alveolar and velar points of articulation. Laterals and vibrants occur only at alveolar position. The semi-vowels contrast at the bilabial and alveolar points of articulation.

1.2.2 Vowels

Vowels contrast as to front, central, and back position and also high and low tongue position. The front high vowels contrast in lip-rounding.

2 INTERPRETATION

2.1 Status of items which may be either consonant or vowel

2.1.1 When [i] and [u] occur as the nucleus of a syllable they are interpreted as vowels because they carry the peak of syllabicity.

[lik	/lik/	'Bamboo'
[mulo/	/mulo/	'white hair'

2.1.2 When [y] and [w] occur word and syllable initially they are interpreted as consonants because they occur in consonant position.

[wauyak]	/wa ^u yak/	'big lizard'
[bɛn]	/wen/	'big brother'

2.2 Status of items which may be either sequence or unit

The following sounds are suspected of being either sequence or unit.

[^ɿâⁱ], [eⁱ], [a^u], [^ɿâ^ü]

They are interpreted as single units because they have the length of the single syllable nucleus and reverse sequences occur mostly across syllable boundaries. This interpretation also fits in with our existing syllable pattern.

[teik]	/te ⁱ k/	'yesterday'
[k ^ɿ â imu]	/ka ⁱ mu/	'centipede'

3 DESCRIPTION OF PHONEMES

3.1 Consonants

3.1.1 Work Chart

p	t	k
m	n	ŋ
b	s	g x
w	l	
	r	
	y	

3.1.2 Description

/p/ [p] voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop occurs word initially, medially and finally, (word finally may be slightly aspirated or unreleased.)

[palok]	/palok/	'liver'
[napal]	/napal/	'inside of stomach'
[binɛp]	/winɛp/	'mami'

/t/ [t] voiceless unaspirated alveolar stop occurs word initially, medially and finally, (word finally it may be slightly aspirated or unreleased).

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|--|-----------------------------|
| | [tular] | /tular/ | 'ground' |
| | [tamtaŋi] | /tamtaŋi/ | 'cooking banana' |
| | [mãt] | /mat/ | 'woman' |
| /k/ | [k] | voiceless unaspirated velar stop occurs word initially, medially, and finally (word finally it may be slightly aspirated or unreleased). | |
| | [karo] | /karo/ | 'mist' |
| | [sokwaro] | /sokwaro/ | 'baby' |
| | [lə gak] | /ləgak/ | 'wild pit pit' (pl.) |
| /m/ | [m] | voiced bilabial nasal occurs word initially, medially and finally. | |
| | [manəŋ] | /manəŋ/ | 'sister' sg. |
| | [wapuman] | /wapuman/ | 'tomorrow' |
| | [yam] | /yam/ | 'good' |
| /n/ | [n] | voiced alveolar nasal occurs word initially, medially and finally. | |
| | [namək] | /namək/ | 'pit pit' |
| | [waniŋal] | /waniŋal/ | 'edible fruit of some sort' |
| | [wairun] | /wa'run/ | 'young man' |
| /ŋ/ | [ŋ] | voiced velar fricative occurs word medially and finally. | |
| | [məŋa] | /məŋa/ | 'sing-sing' |
| | [manəŋ] | /manəŋ/ | 'sister' sg. |
| /s/ | [s] | voiceless alveolar sibilant occurs word initially, medially and finally. | |
| | [sik] | /sik/ | 'hand' |
| | [məsok] | /məsok/ | 'mosquito' pl. |
| | [matimas] | /matimas/ | 'completed' |
| /g/ | [g] | voiced velar fricative occurs word initially (only rarely), and medially. | |
| | [gar] | /gar/ | 'sandy ground' |
| | [yago] | /yago/ | 'jaw' |

- [x] voiceless velar fricative occurs word finally
 [wəməx] /wəməg/ 'hawk'
- /l/ [l] Voiced alveolar lateral occurs word initially, medially and finally.
 [luman] /luman/ 'widow, widower'
 [palok] /palok/ 'liver'
 [wapital] /wapital/ 'beads'
- /r/ [r] voiced alveolar vibrant occurs word initially (only rarely), medially and finally.
 [rəgən] /rəgən/ 'nothing'
 [yārwar] /yarwar/ 'victory leaf'
- /w/ [w] voiced bilabial semi vowel (non-syllabic) occurs word initially and medially. It occurs in the environment of back and central vowels--it often has some friction before the high central vowel.
 [ware] /ware/ 'village'
 [woui] /woui/ 'old, no good'
- [b] voiced bilabial fricative occurs word initially and medially in the environment of front vowels.
 [bærki] /werki/ 'bamboo torch'
 [libəŋ] /liwəŋ/ 'native pipe'
- /y/ [y] voiced alveopalatal semi-vowel (non-syllabic) word initially and medially.
 [yagu] /yagu/ 'pit pit, one variety'
 [murayan] /murayan/ 'one kind of taro'

3.1.3 Contrasts of consonant phonemes

- /t/ and /s/ [tək] /tək/ 'closed'
 [sək] /sək/ 'arrowhead'
 [tak] /tak/ 'leprosy'
 [sak] /sak/ 'pig'
 [tətən] /tətən/ 'straight'
 [məsən] /məsən/ 'man'

	[masü]	/masü/	'face'
	[matü]	/matü/	'we arrive'
	[wayət]	/wayət/	'little mumut'
	[nəwəs]	/nəwəs/	'one kind of taro'
/n/ and /l/	[nin]	/nin/	'female of animal'
	[lin]	/lin/	'ripe'
	[anpáp]	/anpap/	'one'
	[ǎlpáp]	/alpap/	'negative'
	[maman]	/maman/	'food'
	[wamǎl]	/wamal/	'hornbill'
	[ni]	/ni/	'water, rain'
	[li]	/li/	'bamboo'
	[malar]	/malar/	'edible insect'
	[wanar]	/wanar/	'heart'
/n/ and /r/	[rəgən]	/rəgən/	'nothing'
	[nəgik]	/nəgik/	'greens'
	[kir]	/kir/	'one kind of yam'
	[kin]	/kin/	'boy's younger brother'
	[yaurok]	/ya ^u rok/	'door'
	[ammok]	/ammok/	'a kind of fish'
	[ar]	/ar/	'she'
	[an]	/an/	'he, and, with'
	[nəpin]	/nəpin/	'red'
	[birbir]	/wirwir/	'star'
/r/ and /l/	[rure]	/rure/	'one kind of mami'
	[luro]	/luro/	'stick for planting'
	[wanar]	/wanar/	'heart'
	[wənal]	/wənal/	'ant'

	[mulo]	/mulo/	'white hair'
	[yuro]	/yuro/	'orange inedible fruit'
	[nəmrik]	/nəmrik/	'green bird'
	[waklik]	/waklik/	'dry woven bamboo'
	[ar]	/ar/	'she'
	[al]	/al/	'negative'
/n/ and / /	[təpən]	/təpən/	'cassowary'
	[pipən]	/pipən/	'frog'
	[wənəl]	/wənəl/	'ant'
	[təŋəl]	/təŋəl/	'center of tree'
	[mənko]	/menko/	'knuckles'
	[maŋku]	/maŋku/	'we eat'
	[tani]	/tani/	'close to'
	[naŋi]	/naŋi/	'one kind of mani'
	[siwaŋ]	/siwaŋ/	'boy's sister'
	[yawan]	/yawan/	'one kind of yam'
/ŋ/ and /g/	[naŋo]	/naŋo/	'bamboo knife'
	[yago]	/yago/	'jaw'
	[maŋu]	/maŋu/	'it burns her'
	[magu]	/magu/	'it burns him'
/ŋ/ and /g/	[siwaŋ]	/siwaŋ/	'boy's sister'
	[lawax]	/lawax/	'strong'
	[texi]	/te ⁱ g/	'fern'
	[tailiŋ]	/ta ⁱ liŋ/	'little finger'
/k/ and /g/	[yako]	/yako/	'father'
	[yago]	/yago/	'jaw'
	[teik]	/te ⁱ k/	'yesterday'
	[teix]	/te ⁱ g/	'fern'

	[sualx]	/sualg/	'beak of bird'
	[namaŋalk]	/namaŋalk/	'bird'
/k/ and /g/	[əgati]	/əgati/	'to bury a man/'
	[əkama]	/əkama/	'to call for'
/ŋ/ and /k/	[naŋo]	/naŋo/	'wild sago'
	[nako]	/nako/	'bamboo knife'
	[libəŋ]	/liwəŋ/	'native pipe'
	[libæk]	/liwək/	'bamboo fork'
	[namak]	/namak/	'arteries'
	[yataŋ]	/yataŋ/	'fly'
	[nalik]	/nalik/	'white bird'
	[tailiŋ]	/ta ⁱ liŋ/	'little finger'
	[məseliŋ]	/misiliŋ/	'one kind of hawk'
	[nokalik]	/nokalik/	'throat'

3.2 Vowels

3.2.1 Vowel Chart

i	ü		u
e	ö	ə	o
ɛ			
æ		a	

3.2.2 Description

/i/ [i] Voiced high close front unrounded vocoid occurs initially (only rarely), medially and finally.

[sik]	/sik/	'hand'
[yagi]	/yagi/	'path'
[i]	/i/	'I'

/e/ [ɛ] Voiced mid close front unrounded vocoid occurs word initially (only rarely) and medially.

[ɛlo]	/ɛlo/	'to cut with sickle'
[mɛk]	/mɛk/	'wild banana'
[yatɛlɔ]	/yatɛlɔ/	'a little body of water'

[æ] Voiced low close front unrounded vocoid occurs word medially and finally following [b] /w/.

[bæ]	/we/	'brother or sister of same sex'
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[bærki]	/werki/	'bamboo torch'
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[e] Voiced mid open front unrounded vocoid occurs word finally.

[mame]	/mame/	'insect'
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[ware]	/ware/	'village'
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/ü/ [ü] Voiced high close front rounded vocoid occurs word initially (only rarely), medially and finally.

[ü]	/ü/	'you' pl.
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[süla]	/süla/	'post of house'
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[tüŋi]	/tüŋi/	'hawk'
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[amnü]	/amnü/	'tulip'
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/a/ [a] Voiced low open central unrounded vocoid occurs word initially, medially and finally. In a fronted environment it is also slightly raised.

[argi]	/argi/	'lair, head'
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[meŋa]	/meŋa/	'singsing'
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[ǎlpǎp]	/ǎlpǎp/	'negative'
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/ə/ [ə] Voiced mid close central vocoid occurs word initially and medially. Following /w/ it tends to be backed and in a front environment it often tends to be fronted.

[əka]	/əka/	'to get'
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[sək]	/sək/	'arrowhead'
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[wənpuk]	/wənpuk/	'chest'
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[pənok]	/pənok/	'edible leaves'
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[ö] Voiced mid close front rounded vocoid occurs word finally and in isolation.

[ö]	/ö/	'1st person plural'
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[matö]	/matə/	'betelnut'
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/u/ [u] Voiced high close back rounded vocoid occurs word initially (rarely), medially and finally.

[usiɛm]	/usiem/	'we two'
[wapuman]	/wapuman/	'tomorrow'
[wupli]	/wupli/	'sun'
[waru]	/waru/	'cooking banana'

/o/ [o] Voiced mid close back rounded vocoid occurs word initially (very rarely), medially and finally.

[ogar]	/ogar/	'red garden frog'
[sokwaro]	/sokwaro/	'baby'
[palok]	/palok/	'liver'

3.2.3 Contrast of Vowel Phonemes

The vowel contrasts can be summarized as follows:

[sik]	/sik/	'hand'
[lək]	/lek/	'a tree with edible fruit'
[sük]	/sük/	'banana leaf'
[sək]	/sək/	'arrowhead'
[sak]	/sak/	'pig'
[suk]	/suk/	'belly'
[sok]	/sok/	'betelnut leaf'
/i/ and /ü/ [sik]	/sik/	'hand'
[sük]	/sük/	'banana leaf'
[sülat]	/sülat/	'instrument for yam pounding'
[silak]	/silak/	'one kind of fish'
[amni]	/amni/	'roof'
[amnü]	/amnü/	'edible greens'
[lik]	/lik/	'bamboo' pl.
[lük]	/lük/	'corner'
[li]	/li/	'bamboo' sg.
[lü]	/lü/	'a kind of frog'

/i/ and /e/	[lik]	/lik/	'bamboo'
	[lek]	/lek/	'tree with edible fruit'
	[winəp]	/winəp/	'mami'
	[wɛnal]	/wɛnal/	'yellow ant'
	[mami]	/mami/	'ancestors, elderly people'
	[mame]	/mame/	'edible insect'
	[suik]	/suik/	'one kind of ant'
	[suek]	/suek/	'banana'
	[mamek]	/mamek/	'edible insect'
	[nəmik]	/nəmik/	'bone'
/i/ and /ə/	[sik]	/sik/	'hand'
	[sək]	/sək/	'arrowhead'
	[virwir]	/wirwir/	'planet'
	[wərwɛx]	/wərwɛg/	'knee'
	[kanmin]	/kanmin/	'nephew, relative'
	[kəmən]	/kəmən/	'shadow'
	[ö]	/ə/	'1st person pl.'
	[i]	/i/	'1st person sg.'
	[nipər]	/nipər/	'dirty'
	[nəpin]	/nəpin/	'red'
/ü/ and /ə/	[sük]	/sük/	'banana leaf'
	[sək]	/sək/	'arrowhead'
	[əkənü]	/əkənü/	'to answer'
	[əküni]	/əküni/	'to bathe'
	[watü]	/watü/	'to arrive'
	[matü]	/matə/	'betelnut'

	[bilək]	/wilək/	'eye'
	[yisük]	/yisük/	'betel pepper'
	[tüŋi]	/tüŋi/	'pisin bilong wara'
	[təŋtətəŋ]	/təŋtətəŋ/	'fat' adj.
/e/ and /ə/	[mek]	/mek/	'wild banana'
	[mək]	/mək/	'ear'
	[wɛwɔl]	/wewɔl/	'flying fox'
	[wɛwi]	/wɛwi/	'negative'
	[ənɪmən]	/ənɪmən/	'I tell him'
	[kəmən]	/kəmən/	'shadow'
	[wɛr]	/wɛr/	'white tree kangaroo'
	[wɛr]	/wɛr/	'taro'
	[təŋtətəŋ]	/təŋtətəŋ/	'fat' adj.
	[tɛŋal]	/tɛŋal/	'trunk of tree'
	[təŋtətəŋ]	/təŋtətəŋ/	'fat' adj.
	[tɛŋal]	/tɛŋal/	'trunk of tree'
/ə/ and /a/	[sək]	/sək/	'pig'
	[sək]	/sək/	'arrowhead'
	[wɛrɔwɔl]	/wɛrɔwɔl/	'a green frog'
	[wɛrɔrɔk]	/wɛrɔrɔk/	'ditch'
	[kəmən]	/kəmən/	'wild tapioca'
	[kəmən]	/kəmən/	'shadow'
	[mak]	/mak/	'breast'
	[mək]	/mək/	'ear'
	[əkən]	/əkən/	'Iknock down' (e.g. coconut)
	[əkan]	/əkan/	'I get'
/u/ and /u/	[suk]	/suk/	'belly'
	[sük]	/sük/	'banana leaf'

	[tūŋi]	/tūŋi/	'one kind of hawk'
	[tugin]	/tugin/	'bamboo comb'
	[luk]	/luk/	'sago'
	[lük]	/lük/	'corner'
	[lür]	/lür/	'planting stick'
	[pəlur]	/pəlur/	'lizard'
	[yamsu]	/yamsu/	'I shut (it)'
	[masü]	/masü/	'face'
/u/ and /ə/	[suk]	/suk/	'belly'
	[sək]	/sək/	'arrowhead'
	[yunił]	/yunił/	'magots'
	[yənəm]	/yənəm/	'younger brother's wife'
	[bilək]	/wilək/	'eve'
	[valuk]	/waluk/	'tree kangaroo'
	[tuk]	/tuk/	'back bone'
	[tək]	/tək/	'closed'
	[wələl]	/wələl/	'shoot of plant'
	[wulir]	/wulir/	'sago'
/u/ and /o/	[suk]	/suk/	'belly'
	[sok]	/sok/	'betelnut leaf'
	[sokal]	/sokal/	'bush house'
	[sukik]	/sukik/	'navel'
	[yago]	/yago/	'jaw'
	[yagu]	/yagu/	'a type of wild sugar cane'
	[trok]	/trok/	'thigh'
	[krup]	/krup/	'white bird'
	[aŋo]	/aŋo/	'go up ...'
	[aŋu]	/aŋu/	'eat'

/o/ and /ə/	[sok]	/sok/	'betelnut leaf'
	[sək]	/sək/	'arrow'
	[nokal]	/nokal/	'name'
	[nəkər wər]	/nəkər wər/	'funny man'
	[nɛro]	/nero/	'meat'
	[lürö]	/lürö/	'planting stick'
	[nok]	/nok/	'black, native salt'
	[nək]	/nək/	'blood'
	[ö]	/ə/	'1st person pl.'
	[o]	/o/	'1st person dual'
/e/ and /a/	[mak]	/mak/	'breast'
	[mɛk]	/mek/	'wild banana'
	[bərki]	/werki/	'bamboo torch'
	[warparok]	/warparok/	'ditch'
	[ige]	/ige/	'water hole'
	[ega]	/ega/	'I'm sick'
	[male]	/male/	'he is going'
	[mɛle]	/mele/	'one king of mami'
	[lak]	/lak/	'a sore'
	[lɛk]	/lek/	'tree with edible fruit'
/o/ and /a/	[sak]	/sak/	'pig'
	[sok]	/aok/	'betelnut leaf'
	[wok]	/wok/	'bird's nest'
	[wak]	/wak/	'pandanans'
	[sua]	/sua/	'sago'
	[suo]	/suo/	'leg'
	[mulok]	/mulok/	'bush made trap'
[tulak]	/tulak/	'dirty, muddy'	

[nokal]	/nokal/	'name'
[nakalp]	/nakalp/	'back side of ... 'ouse'

3.3 Vowel Glides

3.3.1 Description

/aⁱ/ Voiced mid open central vocoid [a] glides to voiced high closed front unrounded vocoid [i].

[kâimu]	/ka ⁱ mu/	'centipede'
[tâiling]	/ta ⁱ ling/	'little finger'
[mâil]	/ma ⁱ /	'mother'

/a^u/ voiced mid open central vocoid [a] glides to voiced high closed back rounded vocoid [u]

[yautok]	/ya ^u tok/	'foot'
[auni]	/a ^u ni/	'moon'
[wauyak]	/wa ^u yak/	'lizard'

/a^ü/ voiced mid open central vocoid [a] glides to voiced high closed front rounded vocoid [ü]

[nâükwuti]	/na ^ü kwuti/	'my husband'
[âürö]	/aüre/	'mouth' pl.
[kêlâu]	/kêla ^u /	'rope for carrying'

/eⁱ/ voiced mid open front rounded vocoid [e] glides to vocoid high closed front unrounded vocoid [i]

[teik]	/te ⁱ k/	'yesterday'
[mumei]	/mume ⁱ /	'food coverup'
[teigo]	/te ⁱ go/	'fern, not yet open'

3.3.2 Contrasts of vowel glide phonemes

/aⁱ/ contrasts with /a/ and /i/

[mai]	/ma ⁱ /	'mother'
[ma]	/ma/	'wind'
[ni]	/ni/	'water'
[waru]	/waru/	'cooking banana'

	[wâirun]	/wa ⁱ run/	'young man'
	[birbir]	/wirwir/	'big start'
/a ^u /	contrasts with /a/ and /u/		
	[yaurok]	/ya ^u rok/	'door'
	[yaro]	/yaro/	'limbum floor'
	[yuro]	/yuro/	'edible fruit'
	[petau]	/peta ^u /	'today'
	[əkaltu]	/əkaltu/	'to get up'
	[anta]	/anta/	'to ask'
/a ^ü /	contrasts with /a/ and /ü/		
	[yaüke]	/ya ^ü ke/	'planting stick'
	[yako]	/yako/	'father'
	[yülar]	/yülar/	'kind of pitpit'
	[naük]	/na ^ü k/	'husband'
	[nük]	/nuk/	'throw up, vomit'
	[nak]	/nak/	'kind of pitpit'
/e ⁱ /	contrasts with /e/ and /i/		
	[leik]	/le ⁱ k/	'knife' pl.
	[lek]	/lek/	'a tree with edible fruit'
	[lik]	/lik/	'bamboo'
	[mumei]	/mume ⁱ /	'food coverup'
	[mame]	/mamw/	'insect'
	[mami]	/mami/	'ancestor'

3.4 Suprasegmental Items

3.4.1 Stress, tone and length have not been observed to be pertinent. Stress usually falls on the first syllable. /i/, /e/, /a/, /u/, and /u/, and /o/ have been observed to have greater intensity than /ə/. When /ə/ occurs in the first syllable and another vowel occurs in the following syllable, stress and length can move to the second syllable or both may have equal stress.

4.1 General

A syllable consists of a single vowel as nucleus with an optional onset and/or coda - (c) (c) v (c) (c). The following syllable types occur:

v	/i/	'I'
vc	/an/	'he'
cv	/ni/	'water'
cvc	/sak/	'pig'
ccvc	/prok/	'quickly'
cvcc	/lank/	'night'
vcc	/ark/	'white ant'

Syllable types have been observed to occur in the following positions:

All types occur in isolation.

VC occurs in initial and final position.

V, CV, CVC occur in initial, medial and final position.

VCC, CVCC, CCVC occur in final position.

A maximum of four syllables in one word has been observed. Two-syllable words are the most common.

4.2 Specific

The following vowel and consonant occurrences have been observed:

V	All vowels can occur.
CV	All consonants and vowels can occur.
CVC	All consonants and vowels can occur.
VC	V All vowels except /u/ and /ü/ C /p/ /r/ /n/ /l/ /m/ /s/ /ŋ/ /w/ /y/
$C_1VC_2C_3$	V /ə/ /a/ /i/ /u/ C_1 All consonants occur C_2 /m/ /n/ /ŋ/ /l/ /r/ /g/ C_3 /k/ /t/ /p/ /r/ /g/
$C_1C_2VC_3$	V /a/ /u/ /o/ C_1 /p/ /t/ /k/

C_2 /r/ C_3 /r/ /p/ /k/

VCC

Has only rarely been observed.

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