

Stieng phonemes

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O. Introduction

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O. Introduction.

Stieng is a language of the Mon-Khmer family spoken in southern Viet Nam and eastern Cambodia. In Phước Long province they are said to number about 20,000, and Bình Long province 10,000. We have seen no figure for Cambodia. This study represents the Bulo dialect, which is geographically the central Stieng dialect in Phước Long. Data was gathered while resident in the village of Bukrêoai, near the foot of the Bara Mountain, in the Phước Bình district of Phước Long.

1. Syllable and word structure.

Stieng syllables are of two types : presyllables and main syllables. The presyllable can be symbolized as POS, where P may be any stop or /s/, O is a neutral vowel, noncontrastive in quality and length, and S is a syllabic (cf. §3.2). A pre-

syllable may be composed of PO' /bɔ'naŋ/ '24-hr period', S /ndah/ 'not yet', or PO'S /kɔ'mlan/ 'health'.

The main syllable can be symbolized as CHWVF. C may be any consonant, H represents the phonemes /h,w,l,r/, W represents /w,l/, V any vowel, and F any consonant except a voiced stop or a glottalized consonant (§3.1; 3.3).

Clusters of up to three consonants may occur in the main syllable. The only 3-consonant clusters that have been found are /thl, khw/. /thlây/ 'expensive', /khwan/ 'dare', /khwah/ 'lack'.

Two consonant clusters may be formed with /h,w,l,r/ in H position. All simple stops can combine with /h/ (but with a voiced stop and /h/ there cannot be a presyllable). /bhÿy/ 'breezy'. /w/ combines with only /k,ɟ/. /gwâl/ 'to herd'. /l/ combines with only /p/b/k/g/. plòk/ 'to open'. /r/ can combine with any simple or glottalized stop. /ʔbrÿs/ 'immediately'.

Words then may be monosyllabic (/ʔê/ 'repair', /khwah/ 'lack') or disyllabic (/bɔ'naŋ/ '24-hr period'). Disyllabic words are stressed on the main (second) syllable. No words have been found with the full PO'SCHWVF structure — PO'S and W slots are mutually exclusive except in a few reduplicated forms. /kɔ'khwan/ reduplicated from /khwan/ 'dare'. /pɔ'ndriŋ/ (pəndri.əŋ) 'nourishing' illustrates the maximum phonemic positions which can be filled in one word.

A few items do not fit the predominant pattern. Some, usually showing reduplication, have a cluster in P position. /khɔ'khurt/ 'stir'. Others, perhaps onomatopoeic, have a non-syllabic in S position. /ʔɔkʔay/ 'a lizard'.

2. Vowel phonemes.

The vowels of Stieng are :

	Front	Central	Back	
High	i	ɪ	u	
Mid	ê	ɔ	ô	prosody :
Low	e	a	o	length

- /i/ [i.] high front close unrounded, phonetically long but functioning phonemically as short /i/. [iə] high front close unrounded gliding off to mid central, functioning phonemically as long /i/. [riːŋ] /ring/ 'dangerous', [tiəŋ] /ting/ 'tail'. This analysis avoids having to posit vowel clusters, and also fills the otherwise empty short /i/ slot.
- /ê/ [ɪ, ɪ̃] high front open unrounded, occurs in closed syllables except before /h/. [e, ẽ] mid front unrounded, occurs in open syllables or before /h/. [tɪŋ] /têŋ/ 'follow', [ʔɪ̃.n] /ʔêŋ/ 'alone', [mɛ] /mê/ 'mother', [tɛh] /têh/ 'big'.
- /e/ [ɛ-æ, ɛ̃. ̃. æ̃.] low front close to open unrounded, short (usually [æ̃] before /h, ʔ/, long (usually [ɛ̃]) elsewhere. [dɛh, dæh] /deh/ 'grass', [ʔæ̃.n, ʔɛ̃.n] /ʔeŋ/ 'magpie'.
- /ɨ/ [ɨ̃, ɨ̃̃] high central unrounded. /kɨt/ 'able', /kɨt/ 'frog'.
- /ɔ/ [ʌ, ʌ̃] mid central unrounded. /kòt/ 'sunrise', /kɔt/ 'tie'. In the presyllable it varies phonetically over a wide range of articulatory positions, under the influence of surrounding consonants.
- /a/ [a, ã] low central unrounded. /kàt/ 'roughen', /kat/ 'cut'.
- /u/ [u.] high back close rounded, phonetically long but functioning phonemically as short /u/. [uə] high back close rounded gliding off to mid central, functioning phonemically as long /ù/ (cf. /i/). [ʔu.t] /ʔut/ 'hug', [ʔuət] /ʔùt/ 'sleep uncovered'.
- /ô/ [ɯ, o.] high back open partially rounded short, and mid back rounded long [tuk] /tôk/ 'cloud', [to.k] /tòk/ 'to place'.
- /o/ [ɤ, ɔ̃] low back slightly rounded short, and mid-low back rounded long. [kɤŋ] /kong/ 'wheel', [kɔ̃.n] /kòng/ 'bracelet'.

Length is not contrastive in open syllables or in the presyllable, but in closed syllables length is contrastive on all vowels except /e/.

Alternatives to an emic prosody of length would be to describe the phonemic system as having 17 vowel phonemes and consider the articulatory differences between long and short vowels as significant. Or one could describe it in terms of 15

vowel phonemes and 2 vowel clusters.

No distinction of voice quality (register) has been found in Stieng.

3. Consonant phonemes

	Bilabial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p	t	c	k	
	b	d	j	g	

Syllabics	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
		r			
		l			

Glottalized	'b	'd	'j		
	'm	'n			
		'l			

Other	w		y		ʔ
			s		h

3.1 Stops are that class of consonants which may occur in P and C positions in the word. Voiceless stops also occur in F position, but voiced stops do not.

/p/ voiceless bilabial stop. /pɔl/ 'dull', /kap/ 'bite', /pɔrman/ 'lessen'.

/t/ voiceless dental stop /tɔl/ 'to pedal', /dat/ 'very', /tɔrnanɲ/ 'all'.

/c/ voiceless palatal stop. /cəl/ 'wind' /cɔbap/ 'permission'. All palatal phonemes in syllable-final position are preceded by an [i] onglide. [taⁱc] /tac/ 'sell'. [taⁱɲ] /taɲ/ 'hot', [kaⁱɲjoh] /kɔnjoh/ 'fetish pole', [ru^eY] /ruôs/ 'elephant'.

/k/ voiceless velar to back velar stop. /kap/ 'bite', /dàk/ 'water', /kɔnat/ 'clothe'.

/b/ voiced bilabial stop. /bɔl/ 'thick', /bɔkaw/ 'tobacco'.

/d/ voiced dental stop. /da/ 'duck', /dɔlu/ 'young man'.

/j/ voiced palatal stop. /ja/ 'thatch' /jɔŋɔ̃/ 'dark'.

/g/ voiced velar stop. /gô/ 'cow' /gɔŋnèŋ/ 'fang'.

3.2 Syllabics are that class of consonants which occur in the S,C, and F positions in the word. With the exception of /r/, in F position they may freely be preceded by a lenis voiced homorganic stop ([d_l, b_m, d_n], etc.), except after /a,ɔ̃,o/. This is especially noticeable with /n/ and /l/; with the other syllabics it has been heard only in the slow precise speech of the informant while teaching.¹

Nasal syllabics occur only in S,C, and F positions.

/m/ bilabial nasal. /ma/ 'right side', /rom/ 'beautiful', /kɔmbra/ 'grey haired'.

When /m/ alone constitutes the presyllable before /l,r/, it can vary freely to /mɔ̃/. /mlɔ̃m̃ ~ mɔ̃lɔ̃m̃/ 'one'.

/n/ dental nasal. /net/ 'hair ornament', [ju. d_n] /jun/ 'deer', /ʔàn/ 'give', /cɔndrôn/ 'caterpillar', /ndah/ 'not yet'.

/ñ/ palatal nasal. /ñèt/ 'drink wine' /tañ/ 'hot', /kɔ̃njôh/ 'fetish pole' /ñhap/ 'smelly'.

/ŋ/ velar nasal. /ŋat/ 'leak', /lôŋ/ 'on top', /sɔŋgar/ 'drum', /ŋhòŋ/ 'empty'.

Liquid syllabics may further occur in H position following a stop.

/l/ dental lateral. /lap/ 'cut' /bòl/ 'tired', [tɹ. d_l] /têl/ 'tracks', /lhôn/ 'papaya' /ɹlày/ 'wife's brother'.

/r/ alveolar retroflex, varying from trill to flap. Word-initially a non-distinctive vocoid is often heard preceding the onset of the trill. /ãɹic/ /ric/ 'to flood', /bòr/ 'raise pigs', /rhôn/ 'loose', /kɔ̃rmac/ 'twist', /kray/ 'guard'.

3.3 Glottalized consonants are limited to C position in the word. Pre-glottalized stops can occur in consonant clusters, other glottalized consonants only occur alone.

¹ For further details see R. Haupers, 'Word final Syllabics in Stieng', *Văn Hóa Nguyệt San* 11:846-848 (1962).

/b/ preglottalized bilabial stop. /^hbaŋ/ 'bamboo shoot', /baŋ/ 'hen', /mbaŋ/ 'type of people', /^hbòr/ 'goad' /bòr/ 'raise pigs, /brùrs/ 'immediately'.

/d/ preglottalized dental stop. /^ha dôh/ 'the same', /^ha dôh/ 'suffer burns'.

/j/ preglottalized palatal semivowel /^hy./ It is interpreted phonemically as a preglottalized stop because its distribution is like /^hb, ^hd/, and also because phonetically it is preglottalized like /^hb, ^hd/, rather than conglottalized like /^hm, ^hn, ^hl/ in which the glottalization is concurrent with the consonant. /^hjar/ 'bamboo', /^hyar/ 'cast a beam', /^hjar/ 'arrow poison', /^hjrùh/ 'a personal name'. Glottalized continuants never occur first in a consonant cluster. Phonetically, in isolation the voicing may start before the glottalization, and is then heard again before the vowel.

/m/ glottalized bilabial nasal. /m^hme/ /^hmê/ 'new', /^hmê/ 'mother', /s^h murt/ 'paper with writing'.

/n/ glottalized dental nasal. /n^hnaw/ /^hnaw/ 'before', /r^hnàr/ 'a saw', /nar/ 'sun'.

/l/ glottalized dental lateral. [l^h lòy] /^hloy/ 'poor', /loy/ 'leave'. /^hloh/ 'cool', /loh/ 'work'.

3.4 There are five remaining consonants which have no single feature in common. /y, ^h/ may occur in C and F positions, but not in the presyllable or in clusters. /s/ may occur in P, C, and F positions but not in clusters. /w, h/ may occur in C, H, and F positions, but not in the presyllable. /w/ also occurs in W position.

/y/ palatal semivowel. /yùn/ 'Vietnamese', /khay/ 'moon', /khày/ 'confess' (fr. VN khai). The combination /ùy/ is realized as [ue]. [rue] /rùy/ 'a fly', [ruy] /ruy/ 'to make yarn'. The combination /ìy/ is realized as [ie], and has been found only in three personal names (Miê, Liê, Iê).

/^h/ glottal stop. In C position, without a presyllable, it is frequently dropped in rapid conversation. It has not been found in F position after /i, u/. It occurs following either long or short vowels. /ba^h/ 'carry a child'. /bà^h/ 'which types?', /^hòh/ 'answer', /dò^hur/ 'woman'.

/s/ [s] voiceless alveolar fricative in P and C positions. [Y] voiceless palatal fricative in F position, [sa] /sa/ 'eat', [sɔ̃nuk] /sɔ̃nôk/ 'easy', [gaⁱY] /gàs/ 'outside', [ʔσ.iY] /ʔòs/ 'familiar'.

/h/ voiceless vocoid. It has been found after all vowels except /u/. /ha/ 'open one's mouth', /pôh/ 'last year's field', /pòh/ 'clattering bamboo pole for scaring birds', /pô/ 'parent-in-law'.

/w/ bilabial semivowel. /wan/ 'wear around the neck', /kàw/ 'flower', /kaw/ 'owl'. The combination /iw/ is realized as [io]. [lio] /liw/ 'to lead', [liw] /liw/ 'button'.

/a,à/ occur before both /w/ and /y/. /i,ɪ,ê,e/ occur before /w/. /u,ù,ô,o,ɛ/ occur before /y/. /σ,ò/ do not occur before /w/ or /y/.

