

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE IPA

Taba

JOHN BOWDEN AND JOHN HAJEK

*Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics,
University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC 3052, Australia
e-mail: john_hajek@muwayf.unimelb.edu.au*

Taba (also known as ‘East Makian’ or ‘Makian Dalam’) is an Austronesian language spoken in northern Maluku province, Indonesia. It is spoken on Makian, Moti and Kayoa islands and also in a few villages on other nearby islands. The speech recorded here is from the village of Ngofakiaha on Makian island. Slight dialectal variations are to be found in most villages where the language is spoken.

Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Nasal		m			n			ŋ
Fricative			f		s		h	
Affricate						tʃ dʒ		
Trill					r			
Approximant						j	w	
Lateral Approx.					l			

The consonant table shows phonemic contrasts. Although /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are relatively infrequent and originally borrowed, both can now be considered fully native.

p	pait	‘moon’	t	top	‘sugar cane’	k	kam	‘I see’
b	bait	‘wrestle’	d	dɔ	‘couscous’	g	gah	‘theft’
m	mai	‘then’	n	nɔ	‘there’	ŋ	ŋan	‘sun’
f	fati	‘to cover’	s	sɔ	‘to ascend’	h	han	‘to go’
			tʃ	tʃɔt	‘firewood bundle’	j	jan	‘fish’
			dʒ	dʒɔu	‘good’	w	wah	‘island’
			r	rɔre	‘stone’			
			l	lɔt	‘to slice’			

Geminates

All of the Taba consonants except /j, w, r, dʒ/ can occur with distinctive length (i.e. as ‘geminates’). Interestingly, although geminates are found word-medially, they are most common in word-initial position. Geminates are never found in word-final position. They may occur monomorphemically, but they also occur across morpheme boundaries where initial agreement markers are prefixed to verbs. Phrase-initial geminates are realised in careful speech with a greater degree of tension and more articulatory force; in more casual varieties of speech they can be realised with the same reduced tension and

articulatory force as singletons. Some illustrative examples of geminate contrasts are given below.

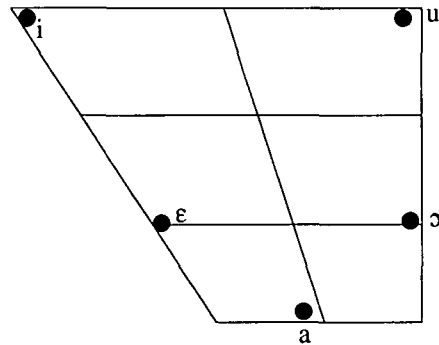
t	tala	'to meet'		l	lɔ	'inside'
tt	ttala	'we (inclusive) meet'		ll	llɔ	'blood'
g	gɔwɔ	'place'		k	kut	'louse'
gg	ggɔwɔ	'neck'		kk	kku	'tail'
m	mul	'to return'		h	han	'to go'
mm	mmul	'you (singular) return'		hh	hhan	'you (pl.) go'
ŋ	ŋan	'sun'				
ŋŋ	ŋŋɛ	'canarium nut'				

Vowels

Taba has a simple five vowel system, as shown on the chart. The phone [ɛ] is relatively rare. Notwithstanding the effects of predictable contextual conditioning (see below), vowels are normally realized as relatively short. Very rare examples of long vowels can be found, e.g. [ki:] 'vagina', but only one marginal example of a length contrast has been uncovered: [tɛ] 'no(t)' v. [tɛ:] 'if not'.

All possible sequences of unlike vowels occur in the corpus except for [ɛa] and [ɛɔ], but none are listed here because they are analysed as vowel clusters and not diphthongs.

i	im	'fishing reel'
ɛ	hɛn	'turtle'
a	am	'to see'
ɔ	ɔm	'uncle'
u	um	'house'



Stress

Stress is indicated by a greater degree of force in the production of a syllable, a noticeably higher pitch than in unstressed syllables, and some degree of lengthening. In general, primary stress falls on the only syllable of monosyllabic words or on the penultimate syllable of polysyllabic words. Examples of antepenultimate stress are extremely rare, e.g. [ʔtʃiɔtʔi] 'we defecate'. Final stress in polysyllables is more frequent, but is generally restricted to a few loan words, e.g. [aʔhad] 'Sunday, week' (< Arabic), and some polymorphemic verb forms with monosyllabic roots, e.g. [naʔpɛ] 'he does' from [pɛ] 'to do'.

Conventions

Stops are not released in final position, and [t] is usually slightly palatalised before [i]. The nasals [m] and [n] tend to assimilate towards a following labiodental [f] while

[n] also tends to assimilate towards following bilabials and velars. [r] is always strongly trilled.

In addition to its use of initial geminates, Taba is also characterized by the appearance of a large set of unusual clusters, e.g. [nmu] ‘muddy water’, [mhonas] ‘sick’, [nhik] ‘bat’, [khan] ‘I go’, [mtɔ] ‘eye’. More common initially than medially, they are often the result of prefixing simple consonants to verb roots in order to mark person and number. In nasal consonant + [h] clusters, e.g. [mhonas], the nasal starts off as fully voiced, with the latter portion devoiced without any concomitant increase in nasal airflow. The [h] offset is clear. Heterorganic clusters with initial [h] are also found, e.g. [hkutan] ‘you ask’ v. [kutan] ‘to ask’. The articulation of [h] in onset is also clear.

Initial geminate contrasts are generally stable, although there is a tendency for some speakers to reduce initial [hh] to [h], e.g. [hhan] ~ [han] ‘you (pl.) go’. Conversely, some non-geminate fricative clusters may be subject to optional metathesis or even complete assimilation, e.g. expected [hsɔpaŋ] alongside [shɔpaŋ] and [ʃsɔpaŋ] ‘you (pl.) descend’.

There is not much allophonic variation in the vowels, apart from the kinds of variations seen in a great many languages: vowels tend to be nasalised before nasal consonants, and they tend to be lengthened slightly before voiced consonants and in stressed positions. Some dialects of Taba replace many instances of Ngofakiaha /ɔ/ with /a/, eg. [wɔg] vs. [wag] ‘canoe’.

Recorded Passage

A riddle about being sick

Transcription

'banda 'ni 'wɛ 'mhonas | 'nim 'wɛ na'lusa 'mhonas || 'nim pap'pukɔ 'mɛ na'lusa 'mhonas || 'bingɔ namɔ'lam || u'lɔn 'nmau 'nhan || 'pɔtɔ 'pɔpɛ 'nmau 'nhan 'ntʃiwi || 'sumɔ na'lusa 'khan || 'mtɔ 'nujak | 'pɔɔ 'mhonas | bai'bijɔ nma'lɔŋɔ || u'lɔn 'nmau 'nhan | 'mtumɔ ɛ 'lɔ ɛ || pap'pukɔ 'mai na'lusa 'mhonas || 'bingɔ na'lusa namɔ'lam || u'lɔn 'jase 'nmau mpa'renta 'nhan || 'pɔtɔ 'pɔpɛ na'lusa ta'siaki || 'mpili ɛ 'lɔ 'li ɛ || 'pɔɔ 'banda ta'siak | 'nhan 'tuli na'hates || 'mau 'nhan 'tuli se'daŋkan 'banda na'pɛ ta'siaki || 'male 'siɔ 'malai 'han 'tuli || 'siɔ 'mul 'malai 'han 'tuli a'han || 'male 'tʃiɔtɪt 'hu 'malai 'than || 'tʃiɔtɪt ɔkik 'malai 'than 'tuli | 'than 'trɔnda ||

Orthographic version

Banda ni we mhonas, nim we nalusa ‘mhonas’. Nim pappuko me nalusa ‘mhonas’. Bingo namolam. Ulon nmau nhan. Poto pope nmau nhan nci oi. Sumo nalusa ‘khan’. Mto nuyak, poyo mhonas, bai biyo nmalongo. Ulon nmau nhan, mtumo e lo e? Pappuko mai nalusa mhonas. Bingo nalusa namolam. Ulon yase nmau nparenta nhan. Poto pope nalusa tasiaki. Mpili e lo li e? Polo Banda tasiak, nhan tuli nahates. Mau nhan tuli sedangkan Banda nape tasiaki. Male sio malai han tuli. Sio mul malai han tuli ahan. Male tciotit hu malai than. Tciotit okik malai than tuli, than tronda.