

Orthography and Phonology Description

Enga Language [enq]

Enga, East Sepik, Western Highlands, and Southern Highlands Provinces

Linguistic Classification: Trans-New Guinea, Engan

Population census: 230,000 (2000 census)

Major villages: Wabag, Wapenamanda, Laiagam, Kandep, Kompam

Linguistic work done by: SIL

Data checked by: Boyd (2016), based on four years' work with the language

Phonemic and Orthographic Inventory

/	ɑ	^m b	ⁿ d	e	^ŋ g	i	ⁿ d͡ʒ	k	ɾ	ʎ	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	o	p	s	t	u	w	j	/
<	a	b,mb	d,nd	e	g,ng	i	j,nj	k	l	ly	m	n	ny	ŋ	o	p	s	t,r	u,wu	w	y	>
<	A	B	D	E	G	I	J	K	L	Ly	M	N	Ny	Ŋ	O	P	S	T,R	U,Wu	W	Y	>

Consonants

	Bilabial		Alveolar		Post-alveolar		Retroflex		Palatal		Velar	
Plosive	p	^m b	t	ⁿ d							k	^ŋ g
Nasal		m		n						ɲ		ŋ
Tap or Flap								ɾ				
Fricative			s			ⁿ d͡ʒ						
Approximant										j		
Lateral Approximant										ʎ		

/w/ voiced labial-velar approximant

Consonants occur in the word-initial and intervocalic positions. The only exceptions are the palatal approximant and voiced labial-velar approximant. The palatal approximant occurs in the word-initial and post-consonantal position, while the voiced labial-velar approximant occurs in the word-initial position only.

/ ^m b/	[^m ba.ɾu]	/ ^m baɾu/	<balu>	'wig'
	[^é . ^m ba]	/ ^e ^m ba/	<emba>	'you (sg)'
/ ⁿ d/	[ⁿ dá.ke]	/ ⁿ dake/	<dake>	'this'
	[^ǎ . ⁿ da]	/ ^a ⁿ da/	<anda>	'house'
/ ^ŋ g/	[^ŋ gǎ.ra]	/ ^ŋ gata/	<gata>	'knocking sound'
	[^á . ^ŋ ga]	/ ^a ^ŋ ga/	<anga>	'pandanus'
/ ⁿ d͡ʒ/	[ⁿ d͡ʒě.ra]	/ ⁿ d͡ʒeta/	<jeta>	'he will become'
	[^ǎ . ⁿ d͡ʒa]	/ ^a ⁿ d͡ʒa/	<anja>	'where?'
/k/	[^{ke} .ma]	/kema/	<kema>	'knife'
	[a. ^{xá} .ɾi]	/akaɾi/	<akali>	'man'
/ɾ/	[^{ɾa} .sa]	/ɾasa/	<lasa>	'greeting'
	[ⁿ da. ^{ɾá} .po]	/ ⁿ daɾapo/	<dalapo>	'these two'
/ɬ/	[^{ɬá} .xa]	/ɬaka/	<lyaka>	'dryness'
	[^ǎ .ɬa]	/aɬa/	<alya>	'up there'
/m/	[^{ma} .pu]	/mapu/	<mapu>	'sweet potato'
	[^ǎ .ma]	/ama/	<ama>	'over there'
/n/	[^{na} . ^m ba]	/ ^{na} ^m ba/	<namba>	'I'
	[^ǎ .na]	/ana/	<ana>	'down there'
/ɲ/	[ɲa. ^{xá} .ma]	/ɲakama/	<nyakama>	'they, you (pl)'
	[^é . ^m ba.ɲa]	/ ^e ^m baɲa/	<embanya>	'your'
/ŋ/	[ŋee]	/ŋee/	<ŋee>	'yes'
	[^{ŋá} .ŋa]	/ŋaŋa/	<ŋaŋa>	'baby'

/p/	['pá.xa]	/paka/	<paka>	'fear'
	['ká.pa]	/kapa/	<kapa>	'sufficient'
/s/	['sǎ.xa]	/saka/	<saka>	'alive'
	['á.sa]	/asa/	<asa>	'here'
/t/	['tǎ. ⁿ da]	/ta ⁿ da/	<tanda>	'pain'
	[a. ^l ra. ⁿ ge]	/ata ⁿ ge/	<atange>	'aunt'
/w/	['wa.xa]	/waka/	<waka>	'other'
	-			
/j/	['já.xa]	/jaka/	<yaka>	'bird'
	[p ^j áa]	/pjaa/	<pyaa>	'hit'

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close-mid	e		o
Open-mid			
Open			ɑ

Vowels occur in the word-initial, word-final, inter-consonantal, and post-vocalic positions.

/ɑ/	[a. ^l pǎ.ra]	/apata/	<apata>	'together'
	['ku.pa]	/kupa/	<kupa>	'cold'
	['pá. ⁿ da]	/pa ⁿ da/	<panda>	'place'
	['pě.a]	/pea/	<pea>	'he went'
/e/	['é. ⁿ da]	/e ⁿ da/	<enda>	'woman'
	[a. ⁿ dá.ke]	/a ⁿ dake/	<andake>	'big'

	[¹ té.pe. ⁿ da]	/tepe ⁿ da/	<tependa>	'far away'
	-			
/i/	[¹ ĩ.ra]	/ita/	<ita>	'tree'
	[¹ pí. ^ŋ gi]	/pi ^ŋ gi/	<pingi>	'root'
	[pu. ^m bũ.ri]	/pu ^m buti/	<pumbuti>	'black'
	-			
/o/	[o. ¹ põ.ne]	/opone/	<opone>	'visitor'
	[¹ tó.xo]	/toko/	<toko>	'table'
	[¹ má. ^m bo]	/ma ^m bo/	<mambo>	'praise'
	[¹ pě.o]	/peo/	<peo>	'I went'
/u/	[u. ¹ rú.pa]	/utupa/	<utupa>	'those'
	[¹ pũ.pu]	/pupu/	<pupu>	'strength'
	[ma. ¹ mă.ku]	/mamaku/	<mamaku>	'mother-of-pearl'
	-			

Diphthongs

/æ/

/ai/

/ao/

/au/

/oe/

/oa¹/

/ua/

/ui/

¹ The diphthong /oa/ occurs only in morphologically complex words.

Diphthongs occur in the word-initial, word-final, inter-consonantal, and prevocalic positions.

/ae/	[ae. ¹ a. ^ŋ ge]	/aea ^ŋ ge/	<aeyange>	'sister-in-law'
	[¹ ɾá.pae]	/ɾapae/	<lapae>	'said'
	[¹ táe.ɬa.mo]	/taeɬamo/	<taelyamo>	'it is spreading'
	[kae. ¹ á.mo]	/kaeamo/	<kaeyamo>	'he ceased'
/ai/	[ai. ¹ pá.ɾe]	/aipae/	<aipale>	'what kind of'
	[ka. ¹ ɾái]	/kaɾai/	<kalai>	'work'
	[¹ pái.na]	/paina/	<paina>	'fair weather'
	[mai. ¹ á.mo]	/maiamo/	<maiyamo>	'he gave'
/ao/	[ao. ¹ ǎ.ɾi]	/aoaɾi/	<aowali>	'circuit'
	[ka. ¹ m.dáo]	/ka ⁿ dao/	<kandao>	'seeing'
	-			
	[ɾao. ¹ á.pe]	/ɾaoape/	<laowape>	'may I say?'
/au/	[¹ aú.ri]	/auti/	<auti>	'act of removing'
	[ma. ¹ ŋgau]	/ma ^ŋ gau/	<mangau>	'jump'
	[to. ¹ m.báu.ɾi]	/to ^m bauɾi/	<tombauli>	'face down'
	[¹ maú.a]	/maua/	<mauwa>	'forbidden area marker'
/oe/	-			
	[^ŋ goe]	/ ^ŋ goe/	<goe>	'swallow'
	-			
	[¹ moé.a]	/moed/	<moeya>	'inheritance'
/oa/	-			

-				
	[^m dó.x ^w a.xa]	/ ⁿ do.koa.ka/	<dokoaka>	'that very'
-				
/ua/	[^w ǎ. ⁿ ga]	/ua ⁿ ga/	<wuanga>	'crookedness'
	[^m w ^s â:]	/muaa/	<mua>	'let's go'
	[kw ^s a. ^x ma]	/kuakama/	<kuakama>	'night'
-				
/ui/	-			
	[^b w ^s i]	/buii/	<bui>	'star'
	[ʈa. ^k w ^s i. ⁿ gi]	/ʈakui ⁿ gi/	<lakuingi>	'woo'
	[^k w ^s i.a]	/kuia/	<kuiya>	'it darkened'

Suprasegmentals

Suprasegmentals include word tone and stress. Tonal melodies occurs in three basic patterns: falling (HL), level (L),² and peaking (LHL). Morphologically complex verbs can combine the falling and peaking melodies (HLHL). The tonal melody spreads to the right. Some words that have the peaking melody delay the peak until the penultimate syllable, even when there are three or more syllables.³ This phenomenon is not predictable. Some morphemes have floating tones that are apparent only when affixed to another word or morpheme. Each mora of a diphthong or lengthened vowel is considered to be a tone bearing unit for the purposes of marking tone in phonetic transcription.⁴ The tone marks used in the phonetic transcriptions are as follows: falling [^ˆ], peaking [[˜]], rising [[˘]], and high [[˙]]. Low tone is unmarked. While these are the five tones that can occur phonetically on a given syllable, it is the overall tone melody that is significant rather than the individual syllable tone. Two-syllable words are always stressed on the first syllable. Three-syllable words are usually stressed on the second syllable for words that have the level and peaking pattern and the first syllable for words that have the falling pattern. Words that have four or more syllables are usually stressed on the penultimate syllable and the first syllable, with one receiving primary and the other secondary stress.

² The level pattern can be either a level low tone or a level high tone. The relative pitch is not significant, but rather it is the levelness of the pitch that is significant. In the phonetic transcriptions, words with the level melody are marked as low tone, but in reality they can be either low or high. There are no minimal pairs that contrast between level low tone and level high tone.

³ That is some words, even though they have three or more syllables to accommodate the low, high, low tones of the peaking melody, delay the peak of the melody until the penultimate syllable.

⁴ Tone is not marked in the orthography because native speakers do not need it to read fluently.

[¹ dî:]	/dii/	<dii>	'Give!'
[¹ di:]	/dii/	<dii>	'fruit'
[¹ dĩ]	/dii/	<dii>	'you gave'
[¹ já.xa]	/jaka/	<yaka>	'bird'
[¹ jǎ.xa]	/jaka/	<yaka>	'enough'
[¹ ké. ^ŋ ge]	/ke ^ŋ ge/	<kenge>	'name'
[¹ ke. ^ŋ ge]	/ke ^ŋ ge/	<kenge>	'buttocks'
[má.si.ɫa. ¹ mí.no]	/masiɫamino/	<masilyamino>	'he is thinking'
[e. ^ŋ dǎ.ki]	/e ^ŋ daki/	<endaki>	'water'
[e. ^ŋ da. ¹ kí.mi]	/e ^ŋ dakimi/	<endakimi>	'with water'
[ka. ¹ re. ^ŋ ge]	/kate ^ŋ ge/	<katenge>	'stand'
[na. ¹ xá.re. ^ŋ ge] ⁵	/nakate ^ŋ ge/	<nakatenge>	'not stand'

Syllables

Syllables occur in V and CV patterns. Diphthongs and lengthened vowels have two moras but only count as one vowel for the purpose of syllabification. The palatal approximant does not count as a consonant when occurring word-medially but simply functions to palatalize the preceding consonant.

	Word-initial	Post-vocalic
V	[ai. ¹ pá.ɾe] /aipare/ <aipale> 'what kind of'	[pe. ¹ á.ma] /peama/ <peama> 'we went'
CV	[¹ p'a.rǎ.mi]	[ja.xǎ.ne]

⁵ The negative prefix [na] results in the verb to which it is attached adopting the falling tone melody. As a result, we would expect to see [¹ná.ka.re.^ŋge]. However, the verb stem /kat/ has a rising (~) floating tone attached to the front that creates a peaking melody when the negative prefix is attached. This floating tone overrides the falling pattern of the negative prefix. As a result we see the word [na.¹ká.re.^ŋge]. In the prior example, however, the floating peaking pattern associated with /kat/ is not realized because there is no prefix and we see the level pattern for the word [ka.¹re.^ŋge].

/pjatami/
<pyatami>
'they will hit'

/jakane/
<yakane >
'small'

Conventions: Phonological

/k/ is fricativized between back vowels.

/t/ is pronounced [ɾ] intervocally.

/j/ palatalizes the preceding consonant when occurring word-medially.

/ua/ and /ui/ make the preceding consonant labial-velar when occurring word-medially.

Utterance-final non-lengthened vowels are devoiced or elided when preceded by a consonant.

A plosive or fricative preceding a devoiced or elided utterance-final vowel is devoiced.⁶

Vowels and diphthongs can be lengthened only when occurring in the ultimate syllable of a word or the penultimate syllable of a two-syllable, morphologically-complex word.⁷

Polysyllabic words that end with a lengthened /o/ or a lengthened /u/ change to /oa/ and /ua/ respectively when suffixes are added. When this occurs /oa/ and /ua/ are pronounced not as diphthongs but as two distinct vowels.

When /ui/ is preceded by /y/ it is not pronounced as a diphthong but as two distinct vowels.

Some dialects pronounce /a/ as /ai/ when the vowel of the following syllable is /i/.

Conventions: Orthographic

When three or more vowel letters occur in sequence and the last two vowel letters are not the same, the letter <y> or <w> is added after the second vowel letter of the sequence. The letter <y> is added if the second vowel letter of the sequence is <e> or <i>, and the letter /w/ is added if the second vowel letter of the sequence is <o> or <u>. For example, /æange/ is spelled <aeyange> ('sister-in-law') and /aoli/ is spelled <aowali> ('circuit').⁸

The diphthong /ua/ is spelled /wua/ when it occurs at the beginning of a word.⁹

Lengthened diphthongs are written the same as regular diphthongs. For example, /muaa/ is written <mua> ('let's go').¹⁰

Lengthened vowels are spelled with a double vowel. For example /saa/ is written /saa/ ('cuscus').

⁶ Prenasalized plosives retain the voiced prenasalization.

⁷ Stressed word-final vowels are always lengthened. Word-final vowels that lose their stress due to the addition of a preceding morpheme are also lengthened.

⁸ Initially the Enga orthography did not add the letters <y> or <w>, however this change was adopted at the 1966 Enga Orthography Conference and reiterated at the 1969 Enga Orthography Conference. It is now the common practice. The reason for this change is not stated, but it is presumably done to make it easier to read words that have strings of three or more vowels in a row.

⁹ This is done to help readers recognize that /ua/ should be pronounced as a diphthong rather than as two distinct vowels.

¹⁰ Doubling the last vowel of the diphthong is considered redundant by native speakers and unnecessary. The only exceptions are words that are formed with three of the same vowels at the end of the word. For example /maii/ is a contraction of /mai/ + /i/ + /i/. As a result, it is spelled <maii> 'you gave'.

Words that are duplicated to convey iterative aspect are hyphenated. For example /ʔaa ʔaa peami/ is spelled <laa-laa peami> ('they went speaking-speaking')

Words that end with /e/ and change the vowel to /i/ when /pi/ is suffixed do not change the spelling from <e> to <i>. For example, the word /meⁿde/ becomes /meⁿdipi/ when /pi/ is suffixed. Nevertheless the word is spelled <mendepi> ('and a').¹¹

Enclitics that begin with /ʔa/ shifts to /ʔa/ when preceding a verb ending in /ne/ or /me/, but this change is not reflected in the orthography. For example, /peʔame=ʔamo/ is spelled <peyame-lamo>.¹²

Words borrowed from Tok Pisin often incorporate Tok Pisin spelling. This includes using the letter <r> for the phoneme /t/, allowing consonant clusters, and using closed syllables. For example, the borrowed word /ⁿʔatama/ is spelled <dram> ('drum').

Sample Text

/ⁿgii meⁿdepa eke meⁿde teamopa, na^mba, na^mbaŋa takaⁿge, ⁿdee na^mbaŋa takaⁿgeŋa tee akaŋi meⁿde, naima saa kutao pjaŋa peama. Naimaŋa jana oⁿgo apata peama. Kaitinisa peamanopa, janame saa meⁿde kaⁿdataŋa, kauu ʔao wataŋia. Opa piamopa, naimame pupaŋa saa oⁿgo piama./

<Gii mendepa eke mende teamopa, namba, nambanya takange, dee nambanya takangenyaa tee akali mende, naima saa kutao pyala peama. Naimanya yana ongo apata peama. Kaitinisa peamanopa, yaname saa mende kandataŋa, kau lao watalyia. Opa piamopa, naimame pupala saa ongo piama.>

'One time when the moon was shining, my father, a friend of my father's, and I went to hunt cuscus. Our dog also went with us. As we were going along the path, the dog saw a cuscus and then barked at it and chased it up a tree. After he did that, we went and killed the cuscus.'

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¹¹ This orthographic standard is the stated preference of native Enga speakers. This phenomenon occurs only on the ultimate word of a noun phrase.

¹² This is done at the suggestion of native speakers to help maintain a consistent word image for the clitics <=lamo> and <=lumu>.

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