

# TIFAL PHONOLOGY SHOWING VOWEL AND TONE NEUTRALIZATION

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## 1. Introduction

This paper describes the phonemes of Tifal<sup>1</sup> and their distribution within the syllable and word. Twelve consonants, five vowels and two tone levels compose the phoneme system. Four of the vowels have lengthened counterparts which makes a total of nine contrastive syllable nuclei.

Of particular interest in Tifal is the neutralization of vowel quality and tone contrast in word initial short syllables.

## 2. Chart of Phonemes

### 2.1 Consonants:

	Bilabial	Alveo Dental	Velar
Voiced Stop	b	d	
Voiceless Stop		t	k
Fricative	f	s	
Nasal	m	n	ŋ
Lateral		l	
Resonant	w	y	

### 2.2 Vowels:

	Front	Mid	Back
High	i		u
Low	e	a	o

## 3. Consonant Phonemes

The consonants of Tifal are /b/, /d/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /s/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /V/, /w/, /y/.

3.1 Contrast between consonants can be shown in word initial position for all except /n/:

/bàŋ/	'splinter'	/bokoòm/	'bird sp.'
/dàŋ/	'substance causing itch'	/dokoòm/	'leech'
/tàŋ/	'limb'	/tokól/	'tree sp.'
/kàŋ/	'pig'	/koloóm/	'pandanas sp.'

/fàṅ/	'true'	/foloòm/	'tree sp.'
/sán/	'story'	/sokoòm/	'pandanas sp.'
/màn/	'child'	/mokòl/	'wild cane'
/nàn/	'diminutive'	/nokòl/	'we'
/làn/	'garden'	/lokoòb/	'new shoot of tree stump'
/wàn/	'sweet potato stem'	/wokoòm/	'bird sp.'
/yàn/	'over there'	/yokoòn/	'fire brand'

Contrast between /ŋ/ and other related consonants can be shown in word final

position:

/koòŋ/	'spear'
/toòn/	'wild nut husk'
/koòm/	'flat surface'
/soòk/	'cord'

#### 4. Vowel Phonemes

The vowels of Tifal are /i/, /u/, /e/, /a/, /o/.

4.1 Contrast between vowels can be shown by the following examples.

/dìl/	'bird sp.'
/dùl/	'tree sp.'
/deel/	'throat'
/dàl/	'vine sp.'
/kòl/	'frog'

Further contrast can be shown between the lengthened forms of the vowels.

/kiim/	'blood'
/kuum/	'tree sp.'
/keem/	'open area'
/taam/	'tree sp.'
/koom/	'flat surface'