

VUTE ORTHOGRAPHY STATEMENT

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(phonetics changed to IPA Dec 2004)

Alphabet of the Vute language

by Rhonda Thwing
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In accordance with the General Alphabet of Cameroonian Languages adopted on March 9, 1979 the proposed alphabet of the Vute language contains the following letters.

Vowels:

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Example	
/i/		i	b̀ni	<i>to catch</i>
	[ɪ]		[bít' tí]	<i>braided (of hair)</i>
/e/		e	ɓ̀è	<i>place, spot, there</i>
	[ɛ]		[tʃene]	<i>chicken</i>
			[jèt'tì nì]	<i>to reproach</i>
/ĩ/		ĩ	b̃ɲ	<i>round, complete</i>
/ə/		ə	ɓ̀óm	<i>calf of leg</i>
/a/		a	ɓ̀àm nì	<i>to roast</i>
/u/		u	vũ	<i>egg</i>
	[ʊ]		[gón' nì]	<i>to buy</i>
/o/		o	ɓ̀òm nì	<i>to bandage</i>
	[ɔ]		[ɔn' nì]	<i>to warm oneself</i>
/ɔ ¹ /		ɔ	ɔ̀k nì	<i>to break (accidentally)</i>

Length: All vowels may be lengthened; length is marked by a double vowel.

ii	gíí	<i>hope</i>
ee	lèè nì	<i>to throw</i>
ìì	lîî nì	<i>to extinguish</i>
əə	gb̀ə̀ə nì	<i>to burp</i>
aa	gààm	<i>horn (of animal)</i>
uu	gùúm	<i>marriage</i>
oo	nóòm nì	<i>to bite many times</i>
ɔɔ	d̀óóɓ	<i>earth</i>

Diphthongs: In the central dialect of Vute two diphthongs occur. Three others occur in the eastern dialect.

ei	ceí	<i>a lot of; much; very</i>
	mvéín	<i>millet</i>
ai	láì	<i>all</i>
	páín	<i>spear</i>
ii	tíí	<i>pardon!</i>
	mìṅgín	<i>hedgehog</i>
əi	yəín	<i>tired</i>
oi	boín	<i>wet</i>

Nasalization: All vowels may be nasalized. Nasalization is marked with a cedilla under the vowel.

ĩ	mwĩ	<i>one</i>
ẽ ²	hẽ	<i>as; since</i>
ĩ̃	cĩ̃	<i>hunger</i>
ɔ̃	dó̃	<i>horse</i>
ã	hã	<i>baggage</i>
ũ	tũ	<i>ash</i>
õ	mṽ	<i>wild goat</i>
ɔ̃	bõ	<i>mouth</i>

Consonants:

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Example	
/p/		p	pé ni	<i>to see</i>
/b/		b	bì ni	<i>to catch</i>
	[β]		[ṅgáβè]	<i>their</i>
	[bʰ]		[ṅgábʰ]	<i>they</i>
/ʃ/		ʃ	ʃər	<i>sky</i>
/m/		m	mír	<i>neck</i>
/mb/		mb	mbeè	<i>salt</i>
/f/		f	fén ni	<i>to arrive</i>
/v/		v	vene	<i>pain, suffering</i>
/m̥v/		m̥v	mvii	<i>sun</i>
/t/		t	tén ni	<i>to cut</i>
	[tʰ]		[watʰ tí]	<i>to dance</i>

/d/		d	dìmir	<i>honor, riches</i>
/ɗ/		ɗ	d̩im	<i>ground egusi seeds</i>
/n/		n	n̩im	<i>thing</i>
	[n̩]		[fén̩ n̩]	<i>to arrive</i>
	[n̩]		[mèi̩n̩]	<i>god</i>
/nd/		nd	nd̩i̩ n̩	<i>to do, make</i>
/s/		s	s̩è̩ n̩	<i>to hope</i>
/l/		l	l̩im n̩	<i>to dive</i>
	[r]	r	tòrò	<i>papaya</i>
	[r]		bír	<i>oil palm tree</i>
/tʃ/		c	c̩im n̩	<i>to dig</i>
/dʒ/		j	j̩im n̩	<i>to beat</i>
/ɲ ³ /		ny	nyóm n̩	<i>to smoke</i>
/ndʒ/		nj	njù	<i>elephant</i>
/j/		y	yèn n̩	<i>to become tired</i>
/k/		k	kén n̩	<i>to dam</i>
	[k̩]		[ɔk̩ n̩]	<i>to break</i>
/g/		g	gè n̩	<i>to carry</i>
	[y]		[ndʒh̩y̩β̩]	<i>of leprosy</i>
/ŋ ⁴ /		ŋ	cə̩	<i>food</i>
/ŋg/		ŋg	ŋgár	<i>hand</i>
/w/		w	wàn n̩	<i>to dance</i>
/h/		h	hàm n̩	<i>to grow</i>
/kp/		kp	kpók n̩	<i>to help</i>
/gb/		gb	gb̩	<i>clan</i>
/ŋmgb/		mgb	mgbàm	<i>small red ants</i>

The notation C̩ indicates that the consonant is unreleased.

Labialization: Only a small number of consonants occur labialized, some only in certain dialects. Labialization is marked with a **w**. Only the vowels **i**, **e**, and **a** may follow a labialized consonant.

ɓw	ɓwâ	<i>time</i>
mw	mwar	<i>field</i>
fw ⁵	fwèn n̩	<i>to give birth</i>
ɗw ⁵	ɗwèn n̩	<i>to close</i>
ndw ⁶	ndwíi	<i>rattan</i>
sw ⁶	swì	<i>mushroom</i>

cw ⁶	cwé	<i>death, sorcery</i>
jw ⁶	jwà ni	<i>to tear off</i>
kw	kwíí	<i>cough</i>
gw	gwi	<i>wife</i>
ŋgw	ŋgwá	<i>husband</i>
hw ⁷	hwàm ni	<i>to bless</i>

Tone:

high tone	´	tím	<i>blood</i>
mid tone	unmarked	məb	<i>louse</i>
low tone	`	tìmni	<i>to drown</i>
mid-high	unmarked	tím	<i>antelope</i>
low-high ⁸	`	ḃùn	<i>grass</i>
high-low	^	bîŋ	<i>round, complete</i>
high-mid	^	mîn	<i>good</i>
high-low-high/ high-mid-high	^´	síím	<i>rainy season</i>

On long vowels, tone is marked (or unmarked) on both vowels.

gíí	<i>hope</i>	léé	<i>deep</i>
mvii	<i>sun</i>	leè	<i>wall</i>
lèè ni	<i>to throw</i>	lèé	<i>intestines</i>
ḃáàŋ ni	<i>to ruin</i>	yòó	<i>wood, tree</i>
lèè	<i>rice</i>	ḃíí	<i>hatred</i>

Down step is unmarked.

Notes:

1. /o/ and /ɔ/ contrast in open syllables and before velar final consonants: /ŋ/ and /k/, but not elsewhere. The more open allophone [ɔ] of /o/ occurs before bilabial and alveolar final consonants, but the phoneme /ɔ/ is recognized by Vute speakers only in the areas of contrast.
2. /ɛ/ is realized phonetically as [ɛ̃].
3. /ɲ/ occurs only initially as a phoneme. Final [ɲ̃] is an allophone of /n/ that occurs in the environment following /i/ or diphthongs ending in **i**.
4. /ŋ/ occurs only finally following central and back vowels.
5. Occurs only in the Doume dialect
6. Occurs only in the eastern and Doume dialects.
7. Occurs only in the central dialect.
8. Occurs only in the eastern dialect on a short vowel. Low-high on a short vowel is realized as low tone in the other dialects.