MINISTRY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH

ALPHABET AND ORTHOGRAPHY STATEMENT FOR LIMBUM

(Donga-Mantung Division, North West Province)

by Ian P.Cheffy

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Language: Limbum (Donga-Mantung Division, North-West Province)

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INTRODUCTION

The alphabet described in this document is the result of research which was begun in 1972 by Miss Lynne Fiore who wrote the first phonology of Limbum. After her departure from the area, her work was continued by her colleague, Miss Pat Peck, and then by Miss Ginny Bradley who, in consultation with the Wimbum Literacy Association, modified the earlier representation of some of the vowels. The modified orthography has been used in the two Limbum primers, *"Bkìnfèr 1 - Tàta ba Nyakò"* and *"Bkìnfèr 2 - Tàta, Nyakò, Fàakɛ ba Nfò"* and in the Easter Story from St.Mark's Gospel, *"Jisòs à Yɛ Ŋgɛ' a Kwe a Fʉʉ efa Rkwe"*. The following is based on the phonological analysis of Lynne Fiore.

THE ALPHABET

Consonants

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Examples initial position	medial position	final position
/b/	[b]	b	bap "wing"	mbuu "reason"	----
	[p]	p	----	gapshi "to share"	bɛp "he-goat"
/d/	[d]	d	du "to go"	nda "who"	----
/t/	[t]	t	tàp "hut"	nati "to stand up"	----
/k/	[k]	k	kʉti "to come back"	ŋkoŋ "pestle"	----
	[']	'	----	se'ni "now"	nta' "chair"
/g/	[g]	g	gʉr "straw tray"	ŋgʉp "hen"	----
/m/	[m]	m	mor "fire"	saamba "seven"	yenyam "leaf sent as message by Nfu' society"
/m:/	[mm]	mm	mmbà' "clouds"	----	----

/n/	[n]	n	ndap "house"	ghoni "to bless"	----
/ɲ/	[ɲ]	ny	nyo "snake"	----	----
/ŋ/	[ŋ]	ŋ	ŋap "to crawl"	jèŋte "to act foolishly"	ròŋ "spear"
/ŋw/	[ŋw]	ŋw	ŋwɛ "person"	----	----
/f/	[f]	f	fu "leaf"	rfa "gift"	----
/v/	[v]	v	vʉp "bone"	----	----
/s/	[s]	s	sa' "bangle"	su'si "to wash"	----
/ʃ/	[ʃ]	sh	shà'tu "comb"	lù'shi "to rest"	----
/tʃ/	[tʃ]	c	ce "tree"	mcɛp "medicine"	----
/dz/	[dz]	j	jù' "elephant"	ndunji "road"	----
/ɣ/	[ːɣ]	gh	ghoni "to bless"	ghàghèr "quickly"	----
/h/	[h]	h	haba (an exclamation)	----	----
/r/	[r]	r	rkar "wheel"	mrɛ' "yam"	nyor "body"
/w/	[w]	w	waŋga "rabbit"	ŋgwa "wife"	----
/l/	[l]	l	lɛɛ "bat"	rlii "name"	----
/y/	[y]	y	ya' "ram"	kyèe "four"	----

Vowels

Short Vowels

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Examples		
			initial position	medial position	final position
/i/	[i]	i	----	ncir "cover"	ntini "today"
/e/	[e]	e	entombì "first"	ceni "to cut into pieces"	cete "to close"
/ɛ/	[ɛ]	ɛ	èno "yes"	fɛŋ "type of rat"	ŋwɛ "person"
/a/	[a]	a	àgho "with"	fà' "to work"	mba "down to"
/ɨ/	[ɨ]	ʉ	----	lʉ'te "to stammer"	kùkʉr "chapter"
/u/	[u]	u	----	suŋ "to tell"	rcu "life"
/ɔ/	[ɔ]	o	----	nyoŋ "quiet"	bo "hand"

Long Vowels

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Examples		
			initial position	medial position	final position
/ii/	[i:]	ii	----	liisi "to quench"	bii "to dance"
/ee/	[e:]	ee	----	beer "red"	btee "alive"
/ɛɛ/	[ɛ:]	ɛɛ	----	bɛɛri "to thank"	lɛɛ "bat"
/aa/	[a:]	aa	----	caasi "to waste time"	baa "corn fufu"
/ɨɨ/	[ɨ:]	ʉʉ	----	bʉʉte "to bend"	kùʉ "rope"
/uu/	[u:]	uu	----	buumi "to sleep"	fuu "mouse"
/ɔɔ/	[ɔ:]	oo	----	mooti "daytime"	boo "children"

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Tone

Toneme	Allotone	Tone Mark	Examples	
			on short vowel	on long vowel
/´/ (h)	[´]	no mark	fa! "give!"	baa "madness"
/¯/ (m)	[¯]	no mark	ndoŋ "cup"	baa "corn fufu"
/`/ (l)	[`]		bè! "count!"	bàa "bag"
/̋/ (hm)	[̋]	no mark	bbaa bca "those corn fufu loaves"	baa "two"
/ˆ/ (hl)	[ˆ]		sâp "file"	kwâa "corn"
/ð̂/ (ml)	[ð̂]		E ker dû "He has gone again."	tâa "father"
/ð/ (lm)	[ð]	˘ (identified by Mfonyam (1989) but not substantiated by language informant of present researcher)		
/˘/ (lh)	[˘]		ngǎr "ant"	njǐi "through"

ORGRAPHY RULES

ORTHOGRAPHY RULES

Word Divisions

The Verb

The subject pronoun is morphologically separate from the verb and is written separately:

Mè du ku ntaa. "I am going up to the market."

The Past Tense Marker

The past tense marker, *"m"*, is written separately even when it is pronounced in conjunction with the preceding pronoun:

E m làa enê.. "He said..."

<u>Capitalisation</u>

The names of people, places and days of the week are written with an initial capital letter, as are the first word of each sentence, proper nouns and the first word of the names of months:

 Ŋwɛɛ ŋkàr bkwâa   "January"

<u>Tone Marking</u>

Tone marks are placed above the vowel to which they apply. In the case of long vowels which are represented by digraphs, the tone mark is placed above the first grapheme of the digraph. Long vowels are interpreted as single phonemes, so where a glide occurs on a long vowel it is marked by the appropriate tone mark above the first grapheme of the digraph. Thus:

 kùʉ   "rope"
 kwâa   "corn"
 tâa   "father"

<u>Punctuation</u>

Conventional English punctuation is followed, using the following symbols:

 " , ; : ! ? .

<u>Alphabetical order</u>

The alphabet is written in the following order with representation of capitals shown.

a	A	n	N
b	B	ŋ	Ŋ
c	C	o	O
d	D	p	P
e	E	r	R
ɛ	Ɛ	s	S
f	F	t	T
g	G	u	U
h	H	ʉ	Ʉ
i	I	v	V
j	J	w	W
k	K	y	Y
l	L	'	'
m	M		

The digraphs *gh* and *sh* are used to represent single phonemes but for the purposes of alphabetising words they are treated as individual letters, as follows:

Correct alphabetical order:

rga
rghur
rgur
rlir

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