

A Grammar of Pichi

Kofi Yakpo

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Kofi Yakpo


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To Yèni and Fodé

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Symbols and abbreviations

-	morpheme boundary	DEF	definite article
=	clitic morpheme boundary	EMP	emphatic
!	directive clause; vocative	F	feminine gender
*	ungrammatical example	FN	first name
,	continuative intonation and pause	FOC	focus marker and identity copula
.	utterance-final: declarative intonation	H	high tone(d syllable)
.	word-medial: morpheme boundary in derived compound	HAB	habitual marker
		IDEO	ideophone
		INDF	indefinite
(...)	untranscribed part of utterance	INDP	independent/emphatic pronoun
[]	explanation of translated elements	INTJ	interjection
/	speech interruption	INTR	intransitive
?	final: question intonation	IPFV	imperfective aspect marker
?	initial: grammaticality dubious	L	low tone(d syllable)
[á]	IPA transcription	L.H	low-high tone sequence over two adjacent syllables
/a/	phoneme	LH	rising contour tone over same syllable
<a>	grapheme	LN	last name
á	high tone diacritic	LOC	locative preposition
à	low tone diacritic	LT	lexical tone
%	boundary tone	MVC	multiverb construction
1, 2, 3	first, second, third person	n.a.	not applicable
ABL	abilitive mood marker	NAME	personal name
ADV	adverbial(ising suffix)	NEG	negative/negator
BE	identity copula	NP	noun phrase
BE.LOC	locative-existential copula	NSPC	non-specific
BT	boundary tone	OBJ	object (case)
CPD	tone deletion in compounding	OBL	obligative mood marker

Symbols and abbreviations

PFV	narrative perfective marker	REP	repeated word in repetition
PL	plural(iser)	SBJ	subject (case)
PLACE	place name	SBJV	subjunctive marker
POSS	possessive (case)	SG	singular
POT	potential mood marker	SKT	“suck teeth”
PP	prepositional phrase	SP	sentence particle
PREP	associative preposition	SPEC	specific
PRF	perfect tense-aspect	SUB	subordinator
PST	past tense marker	SVC	serial verb construction
Q	question particle	TMA	tense-mood-aspect
QNT	quantifier	TR	transitive
QUOT	quotative marker	v1	initial verb in MVC
RED	reduplicant in reduplication	v2	second verb in MVC
		VP	verb phrase

2 Segmental phonology

The phonological system of Pichi features a phoneme inventory of twenty-two consonants and seven vowels. There is a good deal of free and allophonic variation in the use of these phonemes. Phonological processes include nasalisation, the use of clitics and the appearance of a linking /r/ during cliticisation, as well as the reduction of consonant clusters by deletion and insertion. In general, however, Pichi speakers tend to fully articulate consonants and vowels. The majority of Pichi words consist of one or two syllables. There are no phonemic long vowels but words may feature clusters of up to three consonants. The segmental system of Pichi interacts in various ways with the suprasegmental system (cf. chapter 3).

2.1 Consonants

The maximal inventory of twenty-two consonant phonemes in Pichi is presented in IPA symbols in Table 2.1. Details on the status and distribution of these phonemes are discussed in sections §2.2 and §2.6.2.1.

Table 2.1 Consonant and approximant phonemes

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		(Post-) alveolar		Palatal	Velar		Labio-velar		Uvular	Glottal
Stop	p	b			t	d		k	g	kp	gb		
Affricate					tʃ	dʒ							
Fricative			f	v	s							ʁ	h
Nasal		m				n	ɲ		ŋ				
Liquid						l							
Approximant							j		w				

The (near-)minimal pairs in Table 2.2 establish the phonemic status of the segments contained in Table 2.1.

2.2 Consonant allophony and alternation

/b/ and /v/:

The voiced labio-dental plosive /v/ is a phoneme in its own right in a small number of words, where it does not alternate with /b/, e.g. *greví* [grèví] ‘gravity’ and *gív=an* [gívàn] ‘give him/her/it’. In a second group of words, /v/ is in free variation with /b/, e.g. *vájin*

2 Segmental phonology

Table 2.2 Consonant phoneme minimal pairs

/p/ /b/	<i>plánt</i>	[plánt]	‘plant’	<i>blánt</i>	[blánt]	‘reside’
/t/ /d/	<i>tén</i>	[tén]	‘time’	<i>dén</i>	[dén]	‘3PL.INDP’
/k/ /g/	<i>kón</i>	[kón]	‘corn’	<i>gón</i>	[gón]	‘gun’
/tʃ/ /dʒ/	<i>chóch</i>	[tʃótʃ]	‘church’	<i>jóch</i>	[dʒótʃ]	‘(to) judge’
/f/ /p/	<i>fát</i>	[fát]	‘fat’	<i>pát</i>	[pát]	‘part’
/v/ /b/	<i>greví</i>	[grèví]	‘gravy’	<i>bebí</i>	[bèbí]	‘baby’
/s/ /t/	<i>són</i>	[són]	‘some’	<i>tón</i>	[tón]	‘town’
/r/ /l/	<i>rón</i>	[rón]	‘run’	<i>lón</i>	[lón]	‘be long’
/h/ ø	<i>hól</i>	[hól]	‘hole’	<i>ól</i>	[ól]	‘be old’
/m/ /n/	<i>motó</i>	[motó]	‘car’	<i>nóto</i>	[nótò]	‘NEG.FOC’
/ŋ/ /n/	<i>tón</i>	[tón]	‘town’	<i>tóng</i>	[tón]	‘tongue’
/ɲ/ /y/	<i>nyú</i>	[nú]	‘be new’	<i>yú</i>	[jú]	‘2SG.INDP’
/j/ /w/	<i>yés</i>	[jés]	‘ear’	<i>wés</i>	[wés]	‘buttocks’
/kp/ /gb/	<i>kpu</i>	[kpù]	‘IDEO’	<i>gbin</i>	[gbin]	‘IDEO’

[bádʒìn~vádʒìn] ‘virgin’, *ívin* [íbìn~ívìn] ‘evening’, *óva* [óbà~óvà] ‘over, be excessive’, *seven* [sébèn~sévèn] ‘seven’, and *ríva* [ribà~rívà] ‘river’. Free variation is also encountered in the Spanish-derived lexicon of most speakers, as in *abuela* [abwela~aʔwela~avwela] ‘grandmother’.

In a third group of words, we only find /b/, which therefore does not alternate with /v/. Hence, we find *fiba* [fiba] ‘resemble’, *liba* [liba] ‘liver’, *súb* [súb] ‘shove’, *híb* [híb] ‘throw’, *bába* [bábà] ‘cut hair’, and *débul* [débùl] ‘devil’. The orthographic representation chosen for words of the second group, in which we find free alternation between [b] and [v], is <v>. Alternating words are given with both variants in the Pichi-English vocabulary section.

/tʃ/ and /dʒ/:

The voiceless postalveolar affricate tends to be unstable with many speakers and optionally alternates with the voiceless palatal plosive [c] and sometimes with the voiceless postalveolar fricative [ʃ], particularly in word-final position. Hence we find *tách* [tótʃ~tóc~tʃ] ‘touch’. A small number of speakers, all of which belong to Group 1 (cf. §1.3) exhibit allophonic variation between /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in some words, with the latter allophone appearing in word-final position before the clitic =*an* ‘3SG.OBJ’, i.e. *jóch=an* [dʒódʒàn] ‘judge him/her/it’.

The vast majority of speakers, however, and Group 1 speakers in particular, use word-final /tʃ/ in every environment including ones which are not prone to devoicing, i.e. *chénc=an* [tʃéntʃàn] ‘change him/her/it’. I have accounted for the fact that most speakers exhibit no such variation by opting for <ch> in the orthography even though word-final /tʃ/ may be an allophone of /dʒ/ for a minority of speakers in words like *jóch* ‘judge’ (but not in others, e.g. *kéch* ‘catch’).

/s/:

The voiced alveolar fricative [z] is attested as a free variant of the voiceless alveolar fricative between two vowels in word-medial position, e.g. *ísi* [ízi~ísi] ‘be easy’ and *lési* [lézi~lési] ‘be lazy’. I take [z] to be a non-phonemic variant of /s/ in these words.

Furthermore, most Group 1 speakers (cf. §1.3) apply an opposition between /s/ and /ʃ/ (rendered by the grapheme <sh>), which produces minimal pairs like *só* [só] ‘sew’ and *shó* [ʃó] ‘show’. For Group 2 speakers, this opposition is, however, neutralised in favour of /s/, and they employ the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] in any position in which Group 1 speakers may use the voiceless postalveolar fricative [ʃ]. Group 2 speakers therefore produce homonyms like *só* [só] ‘sew’ and *só* [só] ‘show’.

Additionally, Group 2 speakers usually insert a palatal glide /j/ between /s/ and either of the mid vowels /e/ and /ɔ/ where Group 1 speakers only employ /ʃ/. This inter-group variation applies to the following words in the data: *kwésɔn* [kwésjɔn~kwésʃɔn] ‘question’, *nésɔn* [nésjɔn~néʃɔn] ‘nation(ality)’, *séb* [sjéb~féb] ‘share’, *sék* [sjék~fék] ‘shake’, *sém* [sjém~fém] ‘shame’, *sót* [sjót~fót] ‘be short, shirt’, *sén* [sjén~sén] ‘same’, and *sóp* [ʃóp] ‘shop’. Although the insertion of /j/ is optional, it is very common with the words listed. The insertion of /j/ is, however, not generalised to two other words in the corpus featuring a sequence of the phonemes /sé/. Hence, we find *sé* [sé] ‘quot’ and *fəséka* [fəsékà] ‘due to’.

The orthography does not represent the segment /j/ in words to which insertion applies. The words that exhibit this alternation are listed in the preceding paragraph and are additionally identified in the Pichi-English vocabulary.

/n/ and /m/:

The realisation of the alveolar nasal /n/ and the bilabial nasal /m/ is conditioned by a number of factors, which are covered in §2.5.2.

/nj/ and /ɲ/:

A prothetic /n/ is optional (and present in at least half of the occurrences recorded) in a specific group of words with an underlying word-initial /j/. The relevant words are *yandá* [jándá~njándá] ‘yonder’, *yún* [jún~njún] ‘be young’ and *yús* [jús~njús] ‘use’. In this group of words, I therefore analyse the combination of these segments as a cluster consisting of the alveolar nasal /n/ and the palatal approximant /j/.

In a second, equally small group of words, I posit the phoneme /ɲ/, compare the minimal pair *nyú* [ɲú] ‘be new’ vs. *yú* [jú] ‘2SG.INDP’. The other words that do not alternate in my data and therefore appear to feature a word-initial /ɲ/ rather than the cluster /nj/ are *nyangá* [ɲàngá] ‘put on airs’, *nyankwé* [ɲànkwé] ‘(the) nyankwé (dance)’, *nyóní* [ɲóní] ‘ant’, and *nyús* [ɲús] ‘news’. The phoneme /ɲ/ is also found in a word-medial, syllable on-set position in two words in the corpus, namely in the place name *Panyá* [pàɲá] ‘Spain’ and in the ideophone *ményéményé* [ménéméné] ‘whine, nag in a childlike fashion’.

A third group of words with a word-initial /j/ does not usually exhibit nasal prothesis at all, e.g. *yés* [jés] ‘yes’, *yét* [jét] ‘yet’, *yéstadé* [jéstàdé] ‘yesterday’, and *yáy* [jáj] ‘eye’. In the orthography, I only render an initial /n/ with the second group of words, i.e. words that feature the phoneme /ɲ/. Words with an optional prothetic /n/ are listed above and given with their alternate forms in the Pichi-English vocabulary.

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/j/:

This voiced palatal approximant is a phoneme in its own right in words like *yú* [jú] '2SG.INDP', *yá* [já] 'here', *yés* [jés] 'yes' and *yét* [jét] 'yet'. Besides that, some words with a word-initial /j/ optionally appear with a prothetic /n/ (cf. on /n/ below). The segment /j/ is also optionally inserted between /s/ and one of the mid-vowels /e/ and /ɔ/ in another group of words (cf. on /ʃ/ below).

Further, /j/ is optionally inserted between either of the velar consonants /g/ and /k/ and the front vowels /a/ and /ɛ/. However, this process only applies to a few relevant words of English origin with which it occurs in the majority of instances. The corpus contains the following words to which this applies: *gádin* [gádin~gjádin], *gál* [gál~gjál] 'girl', *gél* [gél~gjél] 'girl', *káp* [káp~kjáp] 'cap', *kápinta* [kápintà~kjápintà] 'carpenter', and *kér* [kér~kjér] 'carry'. In contrast, a /j/ is not normally inserted in other words of English origin like *gét* [gét] 'get', *kán* [kán~kám] 'come', and *káyn* [káj] 'kind', as well as a group of words of non-English origin with an L.H pitch pattern, amongst them *garí* [gàrì] 'gari', *kaká* [kàkà] 'defecate', *kasára* [kàsàrà] 'cassava', and *kandá* [kàndá] 'skin'.

The orthography does not render the epenthetic /j/ in words that feature it. All relevant words are listed above and are identified in the Pichi-English vocabulary section.

/r/:

The symbol /r/ varies in pronunciation between that of a voiced uvular fricative [ʁ] and a velar fricative [ɣ]. Some speakers use an alveolar tap [ɾ] instead of these two segments, and I have also occasionally heard an uvular trill [ʀ]. We therefore find variants like the following: *màred* [màxèd~màyèd~màrèd] 'marry', *dríng* [dʒíng~dýíng~dríng] 'drink', *kér* [kèʁ~kéɣ~kéɾ] 'carry', and *rés* [ʁés~ɣés~rés] 'rice'. The orthography represents this segment as <r> and as [r] for phonemic and phonetic transcriptions.

/h/:

This voiced glottal fricative is phonemic in a small group of words which is delineated by minimal pairs like *hól* [hól] 'hole, hold' vs. *ól* [ól] 'be old'. The group contains words like *hát* [hát] 'hurt, heart', *hála* [hála] 'shout', *hós* [hós] 'house', and *héd* [héd] 'head'. The group also includes two words with a word-medial /h/, namely *bihén* [bihén] 'behind' and *wahála* [wàhàlà] 'trouble'.

With a second and larger group, /h/ may be inserted at the beginning of the vowel-initial word. Such a prothetic /h/, although optional, occurs more often than not with most words in this group. Hence we find variants like *ánsa* [ánsà~hánsà] 'respond', *áks* [áks~háks] 'ask', *ópin* [ópìn~hópìn] 'open', and *évi* [évi~ébi~hévi~hébi] 'be heavy'. In some instances, it is however impossible to determine whether a word-initial /h/ is prothetic or part of the segmental structure of a word, because the data contains no recorded instance without an initial /h/. Some of the words to which this applies are *húman* 'woman', *hélp* 'help', *hébul* 'be able', *hía* 'year', *hásis* 'ashes', and *hós* 'house'. I have chosen to render these words with an initial <h>.

A third group of vowel-initial words is not attested with a prothetic /h/, e.g. *óva* [óvə] 'be excessive, over', *ónli* [ónli] 'only', *áfta* [áftà] 'then', and *éch* [étʃ] 'age'. In the orthography, the segment /h/ is only represented with words that always appear with a word- or syllable-initial /h/.

/gb/ and /kp/:

These two voiced and voiceless labiovelar plosives are marginally phonemic and only occur in a handful of ideophones, e.g. *nák gbin* ‘hit IDEO’ = ‘hit hard and unexpectedly’, *sút kpu* ‘shoot IDEO’ = ‘shoot followed by the sound of a dull impact on the body’.

2.3 Vowels

The following seven vowel phonemes are found in Pichi. Vowel length is not distinctive. Consonant allophony and alternation are discussed below:

Table 2.3 Vowel phonemes

i	u
e	o
ɛ	ɔ
a	

The following (near-)minimal pairs establish the phonemic status of the segments contained in Table 2.3:

Table 2.4 Vowel phoneme minimal pairs

<i>mín</i>	[mín]	‘mean’
<i>mún</i>	[mún]	‘moon’
<i>mén</i>	[mén]	‘heal’
<i>mán</i>	[mán]	‘man’
<i>yés</i>	[jés]	‘ear’
<i>yés</i>	[jés]	‘yes’
<i>ól</i>	[ól]	‘all’
<i>ól</i>	[ól]	‘be old’
<i>kól</i>	[kól]	‘call’
<i>kól</i>	[kól]	‘be cold’

2.4 Vowel allophony and alternation

Pichi shows some lexically determined vowel alternation. Hence we find alternate forms like *kér~kéri~kári* ‘carry, take’, *lék~láyk* ‘(to) like’, *gél~gál* ‘girl’, *unu~una* ‘2PL’, *wónt~wánt*

‘want’. Other than that, there is some variation in the use of mid-vowels, with a tendency towards the reduction of phonemic contrasts. Furthermore, Pichi has vowel-vowel combinations, as well as sequences consisting of an approximant and a vowel. There are no phonemic long vowels in Pichi. The properties of sequences of non-identical vowels are covered in §2.6.2.2.

/e/ and /ɛ/:

Minimal pairs such as *yés* [jés] ‘yes’ vs. *yés* [jés] ‘ear’ establish the phonemic status of the unrounded close-mid front vowel /e/ and the unrounded open-mid front vowel /ɛ/. However, many speakers collapse the phonemic contrast between /e/ and /ɛ/ by raising /ɛ/ towards /e/. The opposite direction is far less common. Hence, variants like the following ones are attested: *lék* [lék~lék] ‘like’, *chék* [tʃék~tʃék] ‘check’, *kér* [kér~kér] ‘carry’, and *nék* [nék~nék] ‘neck’. The use of either variant of a content word also often conditions the vowel quality of preceding or following function words (cf. §2.5.3).

/o/ and /ɔ/:

The phonemic status of the rounded close-mid back vowel /o/ and the rounded open-mid back vowel /ɔ/ is evident in minimal pairs like *kól* [kól] ‘be cold’ vs. *kól* [kól] ‘call’ and *fɔ* [fɔ] ‘PREP’ vs. *fó* [fó] ‘four’. Nonetheless, many speakers also neutralise this phonemic contrast by raising /ɔ/ towards /o/. With content words, this neutralisation is less common than the /e~ɛ/ alternation. However, it is almost generalised with Group 1 speakers (cf. §1.3) in words with grammatical functions, such as the associative preposition *fɔ* [fɔ~fò] ‘PREP’, the comparative adverb *mó* [mó~mó] ‘more’, the negator *nó* [nó~nó] ‘NEG’, the coordinator *ɔ* [ɔ~ò] ‘or’, the TMA marker *nóba* [nóbà~nóbà] ‘NEG.PRF’. The negative focus marker *cum* negative identity copula *nóto* ‘NEG.FOC’ is however routinely pronounced [nótò].

2.5 Phonological processes

Phonological processes include lenition and fortition, nasalisation, vowel assimilation, deletion and insertion, as well as cliticisation.

2.5.1 Lenition and fortition

Lenition, the weakening of segments, may affect stops in intervocalic position as in *bigín* [bìyín] ‘begin’. Strengthening, or fortition, affects voiced obstruents, which are generally devoiced in word-final position. Devoicing therefore produces the following word-final variant of segments. The details regarding lenition and fortition outside of these specific contexts require further investigation:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) | <i>Big.dé</i> [bigdé] → E | <i>bíg.</i> [è bík] |
| | big.day | 3SG.SBJ be.big |
| | ‘Festivity’ | ‘It’s big.’ |

- (2) *Híb=an!* [*híbàn*] → *Híb!* [*híp*]
 throw=3SG.OBJ throw
 ‘Throw it!’ ‘Throw!’
- (3) *Bad-hát* [*bàdhát*] → *E* *bád.* [*è bát*]
 bad.CPD-heart 3SG.SBJ be.bad
 ‘Be mean’ ‘It’s bad.’

2.5.2 Nasals and nasal place assimilation

A number of processes involve nasals and nasalisation. These apply in diverse ways to different groups of words. We have seen that /n/ prothesis or prenasalisation is optional with a group of words featuring an initial /j/ (cf. §2.2). Secondly, the following group of verbs with a word-final /i/ and an H.L pitch configuration is optionally (and very frequently) subjected to word-final nasalisation (realised as /n/ or nasalisation of the final /i/): *grídi* [grídi~grídin] ‘be greedy’, *hángri* [hángri~hángrin] ‘be hungry’, *hónti* [hónti~hóntin] ‘hunt’, *hóri* [hóri~hórin] ‘hurry’, *ísi* [ísi~ísin] ‘be easy’, *lési* [lési~lésin] ‘be lazy’, *lóki* [lóki~lókin] ‘be lucky’, *sóri* [sóri~sórin] ‘be sorry’, *wóri* [wóri~wórin] ‘worry’, and *tósti* [tósti~tóstin] ‘be thirsty’. This group of words may be contrasted with a second group that also features a word-final /i/, but exclusively occurs with a word-final nasal. In this latter group, we find words such as *fisin* [fisín] ‘(to) fish’, *ívin* [ívín] ‘evening’, *mónin* [mónín] ‘morning’, and *pikín* [pikín] ‘child’.

A third group of words features a word-final /i/, but is not attested with a final /n/. This group includes words with an L.H pitch configuration, such as *redí* [rèdí] ‘be ready’, *greví* [grèví] ‘gravy’, and *dotí* [dòti] ‘be dirty’. It also contains monosyllabic words like *mí* [mí] ‘1SG.INDP’, *sí* [sí] ‘see’, and *grí* [grí] ‘agree’.

A fourth group involves function words that are subjected to nasal place assimilation. The relevant words are the personal pronouns *=an* ‘3SG.OBJ’, *den* ‘3PL’, and *dén* ‘3PL.INDP’, the preposition *frən* ‘from’, the locative noun *bətón* ‘under(side)’, the TMA marker and verb *kán* ‘PFV, come’, the determiner *sən* ‘some, a’, and the pronominal *sén* ‘same’. In these words, the final nasal is conditioned by the place of articulation of the following segment:

- (4) *Den bəkú.* [*dè̃m bəkú*]
 3PL be.much
 ‘They’re many.’
- (5) *Den gó dé.* [*dè̃ŋ gó dé*]
 3PL go there
 ‘They went there.’
- (6) *Pút=an dé!* [*pútàn dé*]
 put=3SG.OBJ there
 ‘Put it there!’

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Anticipatory nasalisation of a vowel preceding the nasal consonant of these function words is also commonplace (7). The word-final nasal of these words may be deleted altogether, in which case a nasal trace is left behind with the preceding vowel (8):

- (7) *Den kán gí yú. [dèŋ káŋ gí jú]*
3PL PFV give 2SG.INDP
'(Then) they gave (it) to you.'
- (8) *Háw den de kól=an? [háw dèn dè kólǎ]*
how 3PL IPFV call=3SG.OBJ
'How is it called?'

Before a pause, hence when there is no assimilatory pressure from following segments, the word-final nasal in these function words may either be realised as [n] or [m], as in (9) and (10), respectively. The analysis of a subcorpus revealed that two thirds of prepausal instances of the word-final nasal were realised as [n], with the remaining third being realised as [m]. Instances of prepausal *kán* necessarily involve the content word 'come' rather than the homonymous preverbal aspect marker *kán* 'PFV'. The Pichi equivalent of the content word 'come' is more often pronounced as [kám] than [kán] (11):

- (9) *A sabí=an. [à sàbíǎn]*
1SG.SBJ know=3SG.OBJ
'I know her.'
- (10) *A gét sɔn den. [à gét sɔn dènm]*
1SG.SBJ get some PL
'I have some of them.'
- (11) *Kán! [kám]*
come
Come!

The orthographic choice of <n> for the word-final nasal with these grammatical words reflects these tendencies. Nevertheless, the content word 'come' is also written as *kán* in order to preserve the orthographic unity of the etymologically related aspect marker and content word.

2.5.3 Vowel assimilation

Pichi features a tongue root vowel harmony targeting mid-vowels. The distinction between the [+high] vowel /e/ and the [-high] vowel /ɛ/, and between [+high] /o/ and [-high] /ɔ/ is collapsed in stem vowels. Enclitics and adjoining function words harmonise with the stem. Hence we find *den de kéch dén* → [den de kéch dén] 'they [IPFV] catch them'. Compare (12) and (13). Note that in (12), the speaker also collapses the phonemic contrast between /e/ and /ɛ/ in *mék* /mék/ 'make' (cf. §2.4):

- (12) *Dén dé mék=an só. [dèn dè mékàn só]*
 3PL IPFV make=3SG.OBJ like.that
 ‘They do it like that.’
- (13) *Dén de kéch dén dé. [dèn dè kéch dén dé]*
 3PL IPFV catch 3PL.INDP there
 ‘They habitually catch them there.’
- (14) *E dón drónɡo. [è dón drónɡò]*
 3SG.SBJ PFV be.dead.drunk
 ‘He is dead drunk.’

These harmonic processes are reflective of a general tendency of function words to be phonologically assimilated to adjoining words.

2.5.4 Insertion and deletion

We have seen that the insertion of consonants affects various types of words (cf. §2.5.2 and the entries /h/, /s/, /j/, and /n/ in §2.6.2.1). Deletion is less frequent. In general, vowels and consonants of content words tend to be fully articulated (except cf. 16–17). Nevertheless, high-frequency (function) words tend to be phonologically reduced or fused with adjoining words to a greater degree than other words. One function word, the TMA marker *néa* ‘NEG.PRF’, is not pronounced as the fuller variant [névə~nébà] in natural speech in the corpus. The virtually complete sound change of this TMA marker is reflected in the orthographic choice of *néa* (15).

This contrasts with the pronunciation of the functionally equivalent word *nóba* [nóbà~nóà] ‘NEG.PRF’ which occurs equally often in the reduced and full variants. Note that segment deletion may have repercussions for the use of tone (cf. §3.2.2):

- (15) *Dèn néa rích dé. [dèn néà rích dé]*
 3PL NEG.PRF arrive there
 ‘They haven’t arrived there yet.’

Pichi speakers exhibit a systematic tendency to break up onset consonant clusters in which the first segment is the fricative /s/ and the second a liquid or nasal. Both insertion and deletion are employed to achieve this end. The biconsonantal clusters /sl/, /sn/, and /sm/ are very often broken up by insertion of the vowels /i/ or /u/. Thus we have *slíp* [slíp~silíp] ‘lie down’, *smól* [smól~sìmól~sùmól] ‘be small’, and *snék* [snék~sinék] ‘snake’. Biconsonantal sequences of /sk/ and /sp/ are not reduced – hence *skín* [skín] ‘body’ and *spún* [spún] ‘spoon’.

Optional reduction can be observed with onset clusters involving a sequence of the fricative /s/, a stop, and a fricative or approximant, namely the biconsonantal cluster /st/ and the triconsonantal clusters /str/, /skr/, and /skw/. The possibility of reduction is, however, lexically restricted to specific words in the corpus. Therefore *[tímà] is, for example,

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rejected for *stíma* [stímà] ‘ship’. The pronunciation of the initial /s/ is optional in the following words, with either variant being equally common: *skrách* [skrátʃ~krátʃ] ‘scratch’, *skwís* [skwís~kwís] ‘squeeze’, *stík* [stík~tík] ‘tree’, *stón* [stón~tón] ‘stone’, *strít* [strít~trít] ‘street’, and *strón* [strón~trón] ‘be strong’. Next to the words listed above, four additional words occur with an initial /s/ only once in the corpus, namely *tínáp* [stínàp~tínàp] and its variant *tánáp* [stánàp~tánàp] ‘stand (up)’, *pínch* [spíntʃ~píntʃ] ‘pinch’, and *trím-bul* [strimbùl~trimbùl] ‘tremble’. I therefore assume that these alternants are the result of spontaneous back-formation. Words to which optional /s/ deletion applies are given with their alternate forms in the Pichi-English vocabulary list.

The tendency to avoid clustering also frequently leads to the insertion of an epenthetic vowel into coda consonant clusters featuring liquid-stop sequences. Hence, with the three possible coda clusters /lp/, /lt/, and /lk/ (cf. Table 2.8), insertion produces free variants like *hélp* [hélp~hélèp] ‘help’, *bélt* [bélt~bélèt], and *milk* [mílk~mílik] ‘milk’. In addition, Pichi speakers manifest a marked tendency to avoid the clustering of consonants across word boundaries. This leads to the deletion of word-final consonants as in (16) and (17) below.

- (16) *A de sí bíg bíg fáya.* [à dè sí **bí bí** fájà]
1SG.SBJ IPFV see big REP fire
‘I was seeing a huge fire.’
- (17) *If yu hól wán motó (...)* [íʃ jù **hó** wǎ mòtó]
if 2SG hold one car
‘If you temporarily have a car (...)’

The deletion of word-final consonants and the reduction of word-initial clusters is indicative of a general tendency towards CV syllable structures where this is possible. Other processes in which insertion is relevant are covered in §2.2, §2.6.3 and §3.3. The latter section also treats the insertion of a linking /r/.

2.6 Phonotactics

The distribution of some consonants and vowels has already been touched upon in §2.2 and §2.4. The following sections provide details on the ordering principles of Pichi phonemes. Pichi also exhibits an instance of tone-conditioned suppletive allomorphy, a phenomenon relating to suprasegmental phonotactics covered after the basics of the tone system have been described (cf. §3.2.5).

2.6.1 The word

The vast majority of Pichi words are mono- and bisyllabic. In addition, most words carry a single H tone over their only, penultimate, or final syllable (cf. §3.1.3). The presence of a single H tone per word and knowledge of the possible tonal configurations therefore

provides a means of metrically delineating the prosodic word in very much the same way as the position of stress does in intonation-only languages.

2.6.2 The syllable

The syllable template in Pichi is (C)(C)(C)(V)V(C)(C). A vowel constitutes the syllable nucleus. There are a few single-vowel roots, all of which are function words, e.g. *a* ‘1SG.SBJ’, *e* ‘3SG.SBJ’, or *ó* ‘SP’. There are no phonemic long vowels in Pichi, adjacent vowels are invariably heterosyllabic.

Pichi has many words with initial biconsonantal clusters. Some word-initial clusters consisting of three consonants also exist. But both bi- and triconsonantal word-initial onsets tend to be broken up by deletion and insertion (cf. §2.5.4). Word-final consonant clusters contain up to two segments and involve nasals, liquids and approximants as the penultimate segment, or the fricative /s/ as the final segment of the coda. In connected speech, a word-final consonant, whether as the final consonant of a clustered coda or the only consonant of a coda, is often deleted.

2.6.2.1 Distribution of consonants

Table 2.5 presents the distribution of the twenty-two Pichi consonants in syllables (syllable-initial in the onset and syllable-final in the coda) and words (initial, medial, and final). The following abbreviations apply: IO = word-initial onset; MO = word-medial onset; MC = word-medial coda; FC = word-final coda.

Table 2.5 Distribution of consonant phonemes

	p	b	t	d	k	g	tʃ	dʒ	f	v	s	r	h	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	l	w	j	kp	gb
IO	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
MO	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-
MC	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-
FC	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-

Table 2.5 allows the conclusion that all twenty-two consonant phonemes save /ŋ/ occur as word-initial onsets. All consonants except /ŋ/, /kp/, and /gb/ occur as word-medial onsets as well. The latter two phonemes are only attested as word-initial onsets in ideophones. Eleven consonants appear in word-medial codas out of which two consonants appear as word-medial onsets in only two words each, namely /ɲ/ (*Panyá* ‘Spain, Spanish’ and *ményéményé* ‘whine, nag in a childlike fashion’) and /h/ (*bihén* ‘behind’ and *wahála*

‘trouble’). Sixteen consonants occur in word-final codas. Examples of the distribution of consonants follow in Table 2.6.

Only roots are taken into account in Table 2.6, not phonological words. In compounds, all consonants that may appear in word-final position in roots may additionally do so in word-medial coda position at the morpheme boundary. Compare the opaque compound *big-dé* ‘big.CPD-day’ = ‘festivity’, the reduplicative compound *təch-təch* ‘touch repeatedly’, and the lexicalised reduplication and ideophone *gbogbogbo* ‘in haste’.

More than one consonant may appear in syllable onsets and codas. Table 2.7 lists the possible permutations of consonant clusters in syllable onsets, and Table 2.8 lists consonant combinations in the coda. Table 2.7 shows that up to three consonants may cluster in onsets. Clusters of three consonants may be broken up by deletion and insertion (cf. §2.5.4). The sequences /gj/, /kj/, and /sj/ may be said to arise through phonological processes alone (cf. also §2.2). The sequences /gj/ and /kj/ surface through optional /j/ epenthesis in words like *gál* [gál-gjál] ‘girl’ and *kér* [kér-kjér] ‘carry’, while the sequence /sj/ appears in variants like *sóp* [sóp-sjóp] ‘shop’ (cf. also §2.2).

Coda clusters are limited to maximally two consonants. Coda clusters always involve nasals or continuants, and liquid-stop sequences may also be broken up by epenthetic vowels (e.g. *hélp* [hélɛp] ‘help’). Possible cluster permutations in the coda are listed in Table 2.8.

2.6.2.2 Distribution of vowels and approximants

All Pichi vowels may occur in word-initial position. In general, however, vowels only appear in word-initial position in a small number of words. The majority of Pichi words, and content words in particular, either have a consonant, an approximant or a prothetic /h/, sometimes a prothetic /y/ or /w/, in the onset of their initial syllable.

Most words that do have an initial vowel are function words: personal pronouns (e.g. *a* ‘1SG.SBJ’, *e* ‘3SG.SBJ’, *una* ‘2PL’, and *ín* ‘3SG.INDP’), question words (e.g. *údat* ‘who’ and all words featuring the clitic question particle *ús* = ‘Q’), clause linkers (e.g. *adɔnké* ‘even if’, *ɛf* ‘if’, and *áfta* ‘then’), locative nouns (e.g. *ínsay* ‘inside’ and *ɔntɔp* ‘(on)top’), quantifiers (e.g. *ɔda* ‘other’, *éni* ‘every’), and interjections (e.g. *ékié* ‘good gracious’, *áy* ‘expression of pain’). Some content words also feature a word-initial vowel (e.g. *aráta* ‘rat’, *éch* ‘age(-grade)’, *ívin* ‘evening’, and *énta* ‘enter’). In contrast, vowels in word-final position are very common and we find them throughout all word classes (e.g. *mí* ‘1SG.SBJ’, *butú* ‘stoop over’, *sóté* ‘until’, *nó* ‘know’, *belé* ‘belly’, *fɔ* ‘prep’, and *sísta* ‘sister’). There are certain restrictions on sequences of vowels. Not only are there no phonemic strings of two identical vowels (i.e. long vowels) in Pichi; vowel-vowel sequences are heterosyllabic. In such cases of vowel hiatus, the immediately adjacent nuclei bear polar tones, e.g. *bi.ó* [L.H] ‘behold’, *klí.a* [H.L] ‘clear’ vs. **fɔ=an* [L.L] ‘for him/her’. This tonotactic restriction triggers a tone-conditioned suppletive allomorphy of two forms instantiating 3SG object case, a typologically interesting phenomenon not attested in other Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles (cf. §3.2.5). There are also only certain types of admissible vowel combinations, provided in Table 2.9.

Table 2.6 Examples of consonant distribution

IO	MO	MC	FC
/p/	<i>pépa</i>		<i>tép</i>
/b/	<i>bét</i>		<i>híb</i>
/t/	<i>tách</i>		<i>pút</i>
/d/	<i>dásol</i>		<i>blád</i>
/k/	<i>kúk</i>		<i>lúk</i>
/g/	<i>gód</i>		<i>bég</i>
/tʃ/	<i>chóp</i>		<i>wách</i>
/dʒ/	<i>júmp</i>		—
/f/	<i>fút</i>		<i>léf</i>
/v/	<i>visít</i>		—
/s/	<i>sté</i>		<i>néks</i>
/r/	<i>rób</i>		<i>bér</i>
/h/	<i>héd</i>		—
/m/	<i>mék</i>		<i>ném</i>
/n/	<i>nák</i>		<i>bin</i>
/ɲ/	<i>nyóní</i>		—
/ŋ/	—		<i>ling</i>
/l/	<i>lét</i>		<i>púl</i>
/w/	<i>wín</i>		<i>háv</i>
/j/	<i>yá</i>		<i>yáy</i>
/kp/	<i>kpu</i>		—
/gb/	<i>gbín</i>		—

Table 2.7 Onset consonant clusters

Structure	Composition	Example	Translation
CCV	Stop + fricative	<i>pré</i>	‘pray’
		<i>brók</i>	‘break’
		<i>trén</i>	‘train’
		<i>drím</i>	‘dream’
		<i>krés</i>	‘be crazy’
	Stop + liquid	<i>grí</i>	‘agree’
		<i>plé</i>	‘play’
		<i>bló</i>	‘relax’
		<i>glás</i>	‘glass’
		<i>klás</i>	‘class’
	Stop + approximant	<i>pyó</i>	‘be pure’
		<i>bwél</i>	‘boil’
		<i>eskyús</i>	‘excuse (me)’
		<i>tyúsde</i>	‘Tuesday’
		<i>gál</i> [gjal]	‘girl’
		<i>kér</i> [kjer]	‘carry, take’
		<i>kwáta</i>	‘quarter’
		<i>spétikul</i>	‘glasses’
		<i>stón</i>	‘stone’
		<i>skúl</i>	‘school’
	Fricative + stop	<i>smál</i>	‘small’
	Fricative + nasal	<i>snék</i>	‘snake’
		<i>sló</i>	‘be slow’
	Fricative + liquid	<i>konfyús</i>	‘confuse’
	Fricative + approximant	<i>fwífwífwí</i>	‘sound of wind blowing’
		<i>séb</i> [sjéb]	‘divide, share’
		<i>swét</i>	‘(to) sweat’
		<i>fráy</i>	‘fry’
	Fricative + fricative	<i>jwén</i>	‘join’
	Affricate + approximant	<i>nyús</i>	‘news’
	Nasal + approximant	<i>strét</i>	‘be straight’
CCCV	Fricative + stop + fricative	<i>skrách</i>	‘scratch’
		<i>spwél</i>	‘spoil, spend’
	Fricative + stop + approximant	<i>styú</i>	‘stew’
		<i>skwís</i>	‘squeeze’

Table 2.8 Coda consonant clusters

Structure	Composition	Example	Translation
VCC	Stop + fricative	<i>éks</i>	‘egg’
	Nasal + stop	<i>lámp</i>	‘lamp’
		<i>pént</i>	‘paint’
		<i>kónk</i>	‘snail’
	Nasal + affricate	<i>chénych</i>	‘change’
	Nasal + fricative	<i>séns</i>	‘brain’
	Liquid + stop	<i>hélp</i>	‘help’
		<i>bélt</i>	‘belt’
		<i>mílk</i>	‘milk’
	Liquid + affricate	<i>bélch</i>	‘belch’
	Approximant + stop	<i>wáyp</i>	‘wipe’
		<i>dráyv</i>	‘drive’
		<i>táyt</i>	‘be tight’
		<i>háyd</i>	‘hide’
		<i>láyk</i>	‘like’
		<i>stáwt</i>	‘be corpulent’
		<i>práwd</i>	‘be boastful’
	Approximant + fricative	<i>láyf</i>	‘life’
		<i>náys</i>	‘be nice’
	Approximant + nasal	<i>fáyn</i>	‘be fine’
		<i>ráwn</i>	‘surround’
	Approximant + liquid	<i>stáyl</i>	‘manner’

Table 2.9 Vowel sequences

	i	u	o	ε	a
i			ìó	îê	îà

2 Segmental phonology

Sequences involving an approximant and a vowel are presented in Table 2.10. Pichi features both falling and rising sequences. In the former, the vowel comes first (e.g. /ɔj/), while in rising sequences, the vowel follows the approximant (e.g. [wi]). The logically possible sequences *[ji] and *[ɔw] are not attested in the corpus.

Table 2.10 Sequences involving an approximant and a vowel

	j	w	i	u	e	o	ɔ	ɛ	a
j			—	ju	je	jo	jɔ	jɛ	ja
w			wi	wu	we	wo	wɔ	wɛ	wa
ɔ	ɔj	—							
a	aj	aw							

A comparison of Table 2.9 and Table 2.10 shows that opening sequences are realised as vowel-vowel sequences, while closing sequences are realised as vowel-approximant strings. The circumstances surrounding cliticisation speak to the validity of differentiating between vowel-vowel and vowel-approximant sequences. Due to a restriction imposed by tonal phonotactics, =*an* may not encliticise to a vowel-terminal host if the final vowel of the host carries a low tone (cf. §3.2.5). Monosyllabic verbs featuring an approximant as the final segment may, however, take the object pronoun =*an*. Compare the verb *báy* ‘buy’ in (18):

- (18) *Yu wánt báy=an na puerto (...)*
 2SG want buy=3SG.OBJ LOC port
 ‘(If) you want to buy it at the port (...)’

If the word-final approximant /j/ in *báy* [báj] ‘buy’ were an [i], i.e. a vowel, and a tone-bearing segment in its own right, it should be low-toned in accordance with Pichi tonal phonotactics (since it is preceded by a high-toned vowel [áj]). A low-toned final vowel would, in turn, block the encliticisation of =*an* as it does with other verbs with a final low tone. This is, however, not the case, since the sequence [áj] is monomorphemic and bears a single high tone. There is thus no restriction on the encliticisation of =*an*. The same principle applies to other verbs with a final approximant, e.g. *aláw=an* ‘allow=3SG.OBJ’ = ‘allow her/him’.

The distribution of approximants in the syllable may be read from the tables given in §2.6.2.1. Some observations are in order here on variation in strings of approximants and vowels. The verb *dréb* ‘drive’ features the variants [dréb~dráj]. However this free alternation is not encountered with other words to which it could potentially apply. Hence on the one hand, we find *bét* [bét] and *fét* [fét] ‘fight’. On the other hand, words like *bráyt* [brájt] ‘be bright’, *táyt* [tájt] ‘be tight’, and *wáyp* [wájɔp] ‘wipe’ do not have less complex variants with a monosegmental [ɛ] instead of the bisegmental [aj].

The series [ɔj] is found in two groups of words. The first group consists of only two words in the corpus. A second group of words exhibits a free alternation between the

strings [ɔj] and [wɛ] with a preference for the latter sequence. A third group of words invariably features [wɛ] and is not attested with the [ɔj] variant:

(19)	Group 1	<i>bɔy</i>	[bɔj]	‘boy’
		<i>ɔyl</i>	[ɔjl]	‘oil’
	Group 2	<i>spwél</i>	[spwél~spɔjl]	‘spoil, spend’
		<i>bwél</i>	[bwél~bɔjl]	‘boil’
		<i>jwén</i>	[dʒwén~dʒɔjn]	‘join’
	Group 3	<i>swéla</i>	[swélà]	‘swallow’
		<i>kwénch</i>	[kwéntʃ]	‘die off’
		<i>kwésɔn</i>	[kwésjɔn]	‘question’
		<i>wél</i>	[wél]	‘be well’

Note that group 1 contrasts with group 2 in that [ɔj] in group 1 is either word-final (i.e. *bɔy*) or word-initial and the nucleus of a syllable without an onset (i.e. *ɔyl*). In turn, words in group 3 are either bisyllabic (i.e. *kwésɔn* and *swéla*) and feature a consonant cluster in the coda (i.e. *kwénch*) or begin with the alternating feature (i.e. *wél*). Hence the characteristic environment for the [wɛ~ɔj] alternation is a monosyllabic word with a heavy syllable, a single consonant in the coda, and an onset featuring a stop (or a stop component like the affricate [dʒ]).

2.6.3 Cliticisation

Pichi has at least two clitics which participate in forming phonological words. The proclitic question particle *ús=* ‘Q’ attaches to mostly generic nouns in order to form basic question words. The enclitic object pronoun *=an* ‘3SG.OBJ’ attaches to verbs, prepositions, locative nouns, and in double-object constructions to other object pronouns (i.e. ‘the hosts’).

Cliticisation in Pichi is characterised by segmental reduction, the loss of morphosyntactic independence, and inseparability from the host. Two elements can be considered full clitics by these criteria: The object pronoun *=an* ‘3SG.OBJ’ and the question particle *ús=* ‘Q’. Other elements are clitic-like to a lesser degree: Dependent person pronouns may be said to be enclitic to the following element of the predicate, the pluraliser *dɛn* ‘PL’ to the preceding noun.

The question element *ús=* ‘Q’ is proclitic to generic nouns in question words. These question words form single prosodic words, and the proclitic is phonologically adapted to the host; hence *ús=tín* [útín] ‘what’ and *ús=káyn* [úkájɲ] ‘which’.

The object pronoun *=an* ‘3SG.OBJ’ is enclitic to the preceding verb, preposition, or locative noun with which it forms a single phonological word. The pronoun *=an* ‘3SG.OBJ’ may also encliticise to a preceding H-toned object pronoun in double-object constructions (cf. §9.3.4). The pronoun undergoes a higher than usual degree of segmental reduction, hence we find the variants [=àn~à~à]. Under certain conditions, the enclisis of *=an* triggers a tone-conditioned suppletive allomorphy, a (tonal) phonotactic phenomenon described in §3.2.5.

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