

Phoneme Clusters, Syllable & Word Structures

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Introduction

This chapter concerns the vowel and consonant clusters, as well as syllable and word structures.

Vowel Clusters

Vowel clusters are defined as sequences of two or more vowels occurring next to each other in a single syllable with no intervening consonant. There are two groups of vowel clusters in Mah Meri; fronting vowel clusters and backing vowel clusters. This classification is made based on the quality of the vowel of the second component.

Fronting Vowel Clusters

There are two fronting vowel clusters in the Mah Meri language: clusters /ai/ and /ɔi/. Since the second component of these clusters consists of the front vowel /i/, they are classified as fronting vowel clusters.

Distinctive features of fronting vowel clusters

$$\begin{array}{l}
 /ai/ \rightarrow /a/ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} - \text{ front} \\ + \text{ low} \\ - \text{ round} \end{array} \right\} + /i/ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} + \text{ front} \\ - \text{ low} \\ - \text{ round} \end{array} \right\} \\
 /ɔi/ \rightarrow /ɔ/ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} - \text{ front} \\ + \text{ low} \\ + \text{ round} \end{array} \right\} + /i/ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} + \text{ front} \\ - \text{ low} \\ - \text{ round} \end{array} \right\}
 \end{array}$$