

Lesson 3

Simple Vowels in mâṅkuṅ and Location of Articulation

Category	Frontal	Central	Back
Closed	i	ɯ	u
Semi-closed	e	ə	o
Open	ɛ	a	ɔ

The table above indicates, per Mafo Dr. Jacqueline Leroy, that ṅkuṅ has six simple vowels. These vowels are articulated at the front, middle or back of your mouth. The vowels in the first row [i, ɯ, and u] are considered closed vowels because when they are articulated, your mouth tends to be closed. The vowel [i] is a closed vowel that is articulated at the front of your mouth. The vowel [ɯ] is actually a back vowel that is an archiphoneme which neutralizes the central vowel [ɨ] and thus it is identified in ṅkuṅ as a simple central vowel. The vowel [u] is a simple back vowel.

The semi-closed vowels are [e], [ə] and [o] as shown on the table above. When these vowels are uttered your mouth is not all the way open or closed, hence they are referred to as semi-closed vowels. The vowels ɛ, a, and ɔ are all open vowels that are articulated at the front, central and back locations of your mouth respectively. When these vowels are uttered, your mouth is open. It is very important to learn the position of these vowels as I shall make reference to them in future lessons.