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## Vowel Length in Seri Possessed Nouns

Stephen A. Marlett and Mary B. Moser

The difference between long and short vowels in Seri verbs is very obvious due to conjugation patterns, but less so in nouns. As a result, an adequate analysis of Seri possessed nouns has never been presented. In fact, the difference between the second and third set of nouns included in this data squib was not fully appreciated and therefore virtually ignored in Marlett 1981. (The difference is slight enough that one might try to explain it by a phonetic rule.)

The first set of nouns (of which there are many more examples) have consonant-initial roots. In general, stress appears on the first syllable of the root. A subset of these nouns begins with *j*, and these conjugate somewhat differently. The second and third set of nouns display the remaining patterns which occur. Obviously the vowels with which noun roots of this class begin are extremely restricted.

As for verbs, those beginning with single *a* or *æ* conjugate differently from those beginning with other vowels, including *aa* and *ææ* (Marlett 1981, Marlett and Stemberger 1983, Marlett 1994). Compare the forms of the verb {-apɪ} *lick*, itápɪ (realis), ijóopɪ (distal), imíipɪ (proximal), with the forms of the verb {-aapɪ} *be cold*, táapɪ (realis), jáapɪ (distal), máapɪ (proximal). With possessed nouns, however, the roots which begin with vowels conjugate essentially alike except that in one set the vowels are short and in one set the vowels are long. The question is, What is different about the underlying form of nouns and verbs that accounts for the different ways in which they conjugate?

Seri is spoken by about 700 people who live in the state of Sonora in northwestern Mexico. The data presented here were collected by Edward and Mary Moser between 1951 and the present; the citation forms of these words appear in a dictionary that is currently being prepared. The forms of the nouns used for unspecified possessor are less commonly encountered and more difficult to elicit; hence a form is not provided for all nouns.

The transcription used in this presentation of data is based on IPA conventions. Some phonetic detail is omitted.

### References

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## Vowel Length in Seri Possessed Nouns (Mexico)

The first column is the third person possessed form. The second column is the form used for an unspecified possessor. There is no form in which the root appears without an affix.

### Set 1

1. iíit	?aíit	<i>head</i>	8. itáæn	?atáæn	<i>mouth</i>
2. iíXái		<i>back of neck</i>	9. iXái		<i>root</i>
3. ináii	?anáii	<i>skin</i>	10. ják <sup>w</sup> x	?aják <sup>w</sup> x	<i>ankle</i>
4. inját		<i>heel</i>	11. jáX	?ajáX	<i>belly</i>
5. ipXási	?apXási	<i>flesh</i>	12. jáæn	?ajjáæn	<i>face</i>
6. isít	?asít	<i>earring</i>	13. jáæsoi		<i>venom</i>
7. itáaka	?atáaka	<i>cheek</i>			

### Set 2

14. íi	?ái	<i>black louse</i>	28. ískt	?áskt	<i>lung</i>
15. ímas		<i>personal hair</i>	29. ísía		<i>ear</i>
16. ímoʃ	?ámoʃ	<i>heart</i>	30. íso		<i>bag (of pelican)</i>
17. ímt	?ámt	<i>breast</i>	31. ístx		<i>leaf</i>
18. ímtx	?ámtx	<i>tendon</i>	32. ít		<i>base</i>
19. ína	?ána	<i>hair, feather</i>	33. ítæxa		<i>bladder</i>
20. ínoi	?ánoi	<i>arm</i>	34. ítiX		<i>remains</i>
21. ínʃ	?ánʃ	<i>spinal cord</i>	35. íto	?áto	<i>eye</i>
22. íonam	?áonam	<i>hat</i>	36. ítx		<i>buttocks</i>
23. ípi	?ápi	<i>tongue</i>	37. íX	?áX	<i>liquid, water</i>
24. ípos	?ápos	<i>throat</i>	38. íXak		<i>nit</i>
25. ípʃ		<i>lash (of eye)</i>	39. íXʃ	?áXʃ	<i>pet</i>
26. ísæi		<i>shoulder joint</i>	40. íjas		<i>liver</i>
27. ísk	?ásk	<i>white louse</i>			

### Set 3

41. íiφ	?áaφ	<i>nose</i>	47. íistoX	?áastoX	<i>souls</i>
42. íip	?áap	<i>tail</i>	48. íiʃk		<i>front of body</i>
43. íipni	?áapni	<i>front of head</i>	49. íiʃtim		<i>hipbone</i>
44. íisa		<i>tonsils</i>	50. íixk		<i>strength</i>
45. íisaX	?áasaX	<i>soul</i>	51. íix <sup>w</sup> ni		<i>placenta</i>
46. íist		<i>egg (of fish)</i>	52. íixt		<i>edge of flipper</i>

The forms for first and second person possessor are usually the same as for third person possessor except that the first person form begins with ? and the second person form begins with *m*: ?ináii *my skin*, mináii *your skin*. For *j*-initial roots, the first person form begins with *i*? and the second person form begins with *in*: i?jáæn *my face*, injjáæn *your face*. The *i* is epenthetic and does not appear if the preceding word ends in a vowel. The *n* is the result of a general assimilation rule that applies to the nasal *m* in unstressed syllables.