

Examples:

/a/	hat	hot	/a:/	hat	hard
/e/	wet	wait	/e:/	bet	bench
/i/	nil	nail	/i:/	pis	fish
/o/	kol	cold	/o:/	dok	dog
/u/	susu	breast	/u:/	pul	paddle

Vowel length is only distinctive in the case of /a/ and /a:/. Mihalic (1971:4) distinguishes only nine different vowels. In opposition to Laycock his system has only one /a/.

Tolai has a six vowel system. In contrast to NGP vowel length is distinctive.

/i/, /i:/	/u/, /u:/
/e/, /e:/	/e:/, /o/, /o:/
/a/, /a:/	

The existence of /e, e:/ is overlooked in all dictionaries and grammars except Lanyon-Orgill's *Dictionary of the Raluana Language* (1960:62), though his description is rather superficial and the distinction between /a, a:/ and /e, e:/ is not maintained throughout the dictionary. The treatment of Tolai phonology in Franklin et al. (1974:11ff.) is hardly based on careful fieldwork. They neither recognise vowel length as distinctive nor the existence of the mid-central vowel. My own analysis is based on the Rakunai dialect belonging to the north coast dialects and the Raluana dialect belonging to the Kokopo dialects.

Examples:

/a/	ta	in, on, about	/a:/	ta	sea
/e/	vue	to throw away	/e:/	vue	to throw it away
/i/	pil	to peel	/i:/	pil	to jump
/o/	pot	boat	/o:/	pot	to come
/u/	ubu	to kill, beat	/u:/	ubu	cooking hole
/e/	barbar	to show off	/e:/	ebar	enemy

That /a, a:/ and /e, e:/ are phonologically distinctive is proved by the following pairs:

/a/	kan	perhaps	/e/	kan	away from
/a:/	bar, bari	perhaps	/e:/	ebar	enemy

*Pil to peel* is not an English loanword, but a variant of *pila* (Meyer 1961:314).

*Pot boat* is a very old loanword and already mentioned in Bley (1912:147, 157). The initial consonant cannot be explained, as in other loanwords initial /b/ is retained, e.g. *bok box*. The vowel is short as in other loanwords borrowed from Tok Pisin, e.g. *bin bean*, *bek bag*, *tut shoot*, *vil wheel*.

If other languages of Patpatar-Tolai have a six- or five-vowel system is unclear, Peekel (1909:1) mentioned that in Pala a often sounds like the German *ä*, but this sound may also be an allophone of /a/. Vowel length is at least in Pala and Label distinctive. Label (Peekel 1929-30:104, 108, 110):

/a/	pas	taro	/a:/	pas	to step on, kick
	tasik	my brother		tasi	sea
/u/	ur	you (sg.) + affix denoting future tense	/u:/	ur	two

Pala (Peekel 1909:5):

/a/	tam	for you (sg.)	/a:/	tam	to pile up
/i/	hir	to weave	/i:/	hir	a kind of ficus
/u/	kut	to cut	/u:/	kut	to hang

Since in Tolai (and probably other Patpatar-Tolai languages) vowel length as a distinctive feature is not combined with different degrees of openness, it is impossible to explain the development of the Tok Pisin vowel system as a result of substratum influence from Patpatar-Tolai languages. It seems more likely that the Tok Pisin ten-vowel developed from a five-vowel system, which itself had resulted from impoverishment of the phonological features of the source languages.

### 2.2.1. Diphthongs

Tok Pisin and modern Bichelamar resemble each other in the reflection of English diphthongs. The three English diphthongs /ai/, /au/ and /oi/ are retained. Those phonemic sequences, which are represented in some English varieties as vowel plus /e/ and in others as vowel plus /r/, are reflected as vowel plus /a/. Exceptions are /ɔ:a/ in English *more*, which has become *mo* in Bichelamar, whereas it is *moa* in Tok Pisin, and /εð/ in English *where*, which is monophthongised to /e/ in Tok Pisin, but alternatively /e/ or /ea/ in modern Bichelamar. The standard English diphthongs /ei/ and /ou/ are reflected by /e/ or /i/ and /o/ or /u/ respectively, standard English