

Pronunciation Guide to the Sesotho Texts in the J.P. Mohapeloa Critical Edition

This guide is not a definitive document but a ‘rough guide’ to a language that has tricky pronunciation issues and is known to few people outside southern Africa. Sesotho home-language speakers themselves do not always agree about spelling or pronunciation, and there are limitations when it comes to singing rather than speaking any language. Bearing this in mind, the following pronunciations of vowels, diphthongs, and consonants are offered in the spirit of helping choirs pronounce what they sing. Comments that help to improve this Guide are welcome via the Contact page on www.african-composers-edition.co.za, and corrections to it can easily be made online. Sesotho vowels and consonants are shown on the left; Sesotho examples from the song texts are given in brackets; the International Phonetic Alphabet symbol is shown in the middle; and the sound in an English equivalent (or occasionally other language) or a comment, is given on the right.

Sesotho		Phonetic Alphabet	Equivalent sound
a	(ba, ha, tsatsi)	= a	as in French ‘ <u>la</u> c’
aa	(lekaagang, thepaa)	= a:	as in ‘ <u>la</u> st’ or ‘ <u>fa</u> ther’
ae	(hae, kae)	= aɪ	as in ‘ <u>fi</u> ght’ or ‘ <u>lie</u> down’
ai	(maila, tailoe)	= eɪ	as in ‘ <u>pl</u> ay’ or ‘ <u>ma</u> y’
ao	(ao, kaofela)	= aʊ	as in ‘ <u>ah</u> - <u>oh</u> ’
au	(Taung, Mangaung)	= aʊ	as in ‘ <u>no</u> w’ or ‘ <u>co</u> w’
b	(ba, Basotho)	= ɓ	as in ‘ <u>b</u> ut’
b’e	(abbreviation)	= ɓɛ	as in <u>b-é</u>
ch	(sechaba, chao)	= tʃ	as in ‘ <u>ch</u> air’ or ‘ <u>ch</u> urch’
d	(Sesotho ‘l’ - see below)	= d	as in ‘ <u>d</u> o’
e	(re, hole)	= ɛ	as in ‘ <u>b</u> ed’ or ‘ <u>ye</u> t’
ea	(ea, moea)	= ɶ	as in ‘ <u>ya</u> ’, almost ‘ <u>iya</u> ’
ee	(tjee, lefeela)	= ɛə	as in ‘ <u>the</u> re’ or ‘ <u>wh</u> ere’
ei	(ei, seilatsatsi)	= ɛɪ	as in ‘ <u>pl</u> ay’ (ay-ee)
eo	(eo, eona)	= ɛʊ	as in ‘ <u>Ey</u> ore’ (ee-o)
eu	(qeu)	= ɛu	as in ‘ <u>e</u> uphemism’ (ee-oo’)
f	(Afrika, kaofela)	= f	as in ‘ <u>f</u> ool’ or ‘ <u>f</u> etch’
g	(Gauteng, Mangaung)	= ɣ	as in Dutch ‘ <u>g</u> aan’
h	(ha, hare)	= ɦ	as in ‘ <u>h</u> am’ or ‘ <u>h</u> appy’
har’a	(‘har[e] a’ elided)	= ɦa-ɹ-a	

hl	(hle, hlaha)	=	ʌ	as in Welsh ' <u>ll</u> '
i	(liba, Morija)	=	ɪ	as in ' <u>ci</u> ty'
ie	(lie, tsietsi)	=	ɪɛ	as in ' <u>he</u> ends' (ee-ai)
ii	(pii, tiisa)	=	ɪɪ	as in ' <u>hi</u> t it' (i-i)
iu	(liu, Bosiu)	=	ɪu:	as in ' <u>phew</u> !' (ee-u)
j	(je, joale)	=	dʒ	as in ' <u>j</u> oy' or ' <u>j</u> ump'
k	(kae, thaka)	=	k	almost a hard 'g'
kea_u		=	kʲe-u	<u>kya-oo</u>
kh	(khomo, khotso)	=	ɣ	as in Dutch ' <u>g</u> aan' (soft 'g')
l	(sala, joale, pelo)	=	l	as in ' <u>l</u> eft' ('l' before a, e, o)
l	(lifela, lumela)	=	d	as in ' <u>d</u> o' ('d' before i, u)
ll	(lla, sello)	=	ɫ	as in ' <u>ill</u> -lit' (as in Al-lah, not as in Welsh 'll')
m	(Morena, Moshoeshoe)	=	ɱ	as in ' <u>em</u> pathy'
mm	(mmè, hammoho)	=	ɱɱ	as in 'I' <u>m</u> maybe' (2 'ms')
'm	('mè, 'mutlanyana)	=	ɱɱ	abbreviation of 'mm'
mmè		=	ɱɱɛ	as in 'I' <u>m</u> maybe' (2 'ms')
n	(nong, haneu)	=	ɳ	as in ' <u>n</u> oun'
nc	=		prenasalised dental click	as in the sound for 'tut tut'
nch	=		prenasalised aspirated dental click	as above but aspirated
ng	(leng, mong, nong)	=	ŋ	as in ' <u>in</u> -go'
nk	(nka, nkutloe)	=	ɲk	as in ' <u>in</u> -k'
nn	(nna, senna)	=	ɲɲ	as in ' <u>in</u> -no'
nya	(nonyana, senyamafi)	=	ɲʲe	as in ' <u>on</u> -ya'
o	(potla, koto)	=	ɒ	as in ' <u>not</u> ' or ' <u>pot</u> '
ō	(rōna, thōla)	=	ɔ:	as in ' <u>or</u> ' or ' <u>sore</u> '
oa	(oa, majoana)	=	ɒa	as in ' <u>Iowa</u> ' (oh-wa)
oe	(utloe, Moshoeshoe)	=	ɒɛ	as in ' <u>lowest</u> ' (oh-way)
oeu	(MosoEU)	=	ɒɛ-u	as in ' <u>Soweto</u> ' (oh-ai-oo)
oi	(tsoile, likhoiting)	=	ɔɪ	as in ' <u>coil</u> ' (o-i)
oo	(koo, moo)	=	u:	as in ' <u>soon</u> '
ou	(tloukholo)	=	aʊ	as in ' <u>now</u> ' (ah-oo)
p	(lipina, potla)	=	p	as in ' <u>p</u> apa'
ph	(liphala, phera)	=	pʰ	as in ' <u>p</u> urr' (slightly aspirated)

q	(qeu, qjoa)	=		palatal tongue click
qh	(qho, qhooeng)	=		aspirated palatal tongue click
r		=	r	as in ' <u>red</u> ' or ' <u>try</u> '
s	(se, thusa)	=	s	as in ' <u>see</u> '
sh	(shebile, lipshamathe)	=	ʃ	as in ' <u>she</u> '
s'o	('s[e] o' elided)	=	s-ɒ	almost as in ' <u>Seoul</u> ' (e-o)
t	(teng, litaba)	=		somewhere between 'd' and 't'
th	(theng, thula)	=	t ^h	as in ' <u>top</u> ' (slightly aspirated)
tj	(tjee, matjato)	=	tʃ	as in ' <u>edge</u> '
tš/ts	(tšohang, tšaba-tšaba)	=	tʃ	as in ' <u>its</u> ' (slightly aspirated)
u	(utloa, thula)	=	u	as in ' <u>good</u> '
ua	(ua, bua)	=	u:a	as in ' <u>two one</u> ' (oo-wa)
ue	(fue, uena)	=	u:ɛ	as in ' <u>wet</u> ' (oo-we)
uo	(puo, lipuo)	=	u:ɒ	as in ' <u>too hot</u> ' (oo-o)
uoa	(kuoane, shapuo)	=	u:wɒ	as in ' <u>do what?</u> ' (oo-owa)
v	(Davida)	=	v	as in ' <u>voice</u> '
w	(wa)	=	ɒa	as in ' <u>Iowa</u> ' (oh-wa)
y	(ya, moya)	=	jə	as in ' <u>ya</u> ', almost ' <u>iya</u> '
z	(Eben-Ezer)	=	z	as in ' <u>zoo</u> '