

Mpi

(from SoWL)

Mpi is a Sino-Tibetan language that is interesting for combining a six-way tone contrast with a two-way voice-quality contrast.

In the voice-quality dimension normal (modal) phonation contrasts with a phonation type that Ladefoged refers to as ‘tense’, meaning a moderate form of creaky voice (the term laryngealized has also been used). Essling (1996) has suggested that pharyngealized may be a better term, i.e it could involve aryepiglottic constriction, probably combined with a raised larynx position (see JIPA, 26(2): 65-68)

Related demos:

[More tone languages](#)

[Further voice-quality contrasts](#)

[Xoo](#) (language with multiple contrasting voice qualities)

The sonagram display includes both wide- and narrow-band sonagrams to help highlight both the the tonal and voice-quality differences. Note, for example, the tendency for stronger harmonic energy at higher frequencies in the tense voice condition.

(Note that the the wide and narrow-band displays have different frequency axes.)

Normal
Voice

Tense
Voice

Low Rising

s i

▶ “to be putrid”

s i

▶ “to be dried up”

Low Level

s i

▶ “blood”

s i

▶ “seven”

Mid Rising

s i

▶ “to roll rope”

s i

▶ “to smoke”

Mid Level

s i

▶ (a colour)

s i

▶ (classifier)

High Falling

s i

▶ “to die”

s i

▶ (name)

High Level

s i

▶ “four”

s i

▶ (name)