

Pronoun Syllable Elision in Bahasa Indonesia: Case of Casual Speech in Waingapu

Raynesta Mikaela Indri Malo¹

¹Universitas Kristen Wira Wacana Sumba, Waingapu

e-mail: ¹raynesta@unkriswina.ac.id

Abstracts: This paper discusses elision as one of phonological processes in the Indonesian speech, particularly on the use of Bahasa Indonesia in Waingapu, an eastern city in Indonesia. Elision (or deletion) is a term used in phonetics and phonology to refer to the omission of sounds in connected speech, where both consonants and vowels may be affected, and sometimes whole syllables may be elided (Crystal 2008). As in the mostly eastern Indonesia area, in Waingapu, people usually speak at a rapid speed. People tend to simplify words and phrases to ease the pronunciation and meet their needs for easy and fast conversation. This is the main cause of elision to happen. Data is obtained through recordings of daily speeches in various places. This descriptive qualitative study shows syllable elision in almost all pronouns, both as subject and object in a sentence, such as *sa* from the pronoun *saya* and *ko* from the pronoun *kau*. This elision, combining with other processes, also leads to the creation of new words which function as possessive pronouns as in *dia punya* becomes *de pung* and later changed to *dem* to denote his/her.

Keywords: phonological processes, syllable elision, rapid speech, Waingapu, Bahasa Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Elision is the deletion or the omission of sounds, vowels, consonants, or even syllables in a word. A word is generally pronounced as its citation form which matches the pronunciation given in a dictionary of a particular language. However, there are certain conditions where words are spoken differently from its citation form. For example, in a conversational setting, where speakers utter words and phrases in a more informal situation and in their own idiolect or way of speaking, the changes in pronunciation of certain words might happen. The change might be, one of them, in the form of sound omission. Crystal (2008) gives example of unstressed grammatical words, such as *and* and *of*, as particularly words that are prone to be elided, as when the *f* is dropped in *cup of tea* (pronounced as *cuppa tea*), or the *a* and *d* are dropped in *boys 'n' girls*. This phenomenon is called elision (or deletion) of sounds.

Elision is common in casual conversation. Previous researches have described the speech styles which may cause elision. Some use the terms 'casual speech', 'spontaneous speech', and 'rapid speech'. Casual speech or conversation is the manner in which people talk to each other in ordinary casual circumstances such as at home, during time in groceries, or while watching a sports game. This casual style is the informal style of speaking which is different from formal discourse. In this kind of situation, there are various words, expressions, and ways that people use, deliberately or not, and one of them is elision.

Elision is a linguistic phenomenon of dismembering a sound or more in speech. It can occur in single or groups of words. It has been a prevalent phenomenon in various languages in the world, including English (Andana 2018). There are three causes of elision, the canonical, cultural, and natural causes. In canonical case, take an example in English where the /k/ is absent in the pronunciation of the word 'knife' as \ 'nɪf \. On a cultural level, an example is taken from the Sabu ethnic group from Indonesia. In the use of the Indonesian language by the people from Sabu, they often omit the consonant sound at the end of the word. This is due to the fact that the Sabu language itself is a language characterized by words ending in vowels. This habit is carried over when pronouncing Indonesian words (Lawi 2020) such as the pronunciation of word 'makan' from /makan/ to /maka/ for the word 'gelas' from /gelas/ to /gela/. In natural cause, Byrd & Tan stated that elision is involuntarily committed as by-products of less duration limit in covering phonological units such as conversion of /æftər'nu:n/ from a word 'afternoon' into /æft'nu:n/ when it is uttered in a fast speed (in Andana 2018).

Elision is the product of fast speech, naturally triggered by speech rate. When speakers try to speak or utter certain numbers of phonological units in a certain delivery time, then they have to omit one or a few sounds

to manage with the time. Although some studies show that elision may occur in slower speech (Harrison 2007), speech rate is still a risky environment for elisions to occur (Andana 2018). Studies prove that rapid speech is the main cause of elision. It is the typical of rapid, casual speech (Roach 2009).

Davidson (2006), in a study of the elision schwa in fast speech found that reduced delivery duration affects schwa elision, either it is provoked by arrangement of the types of sounds neighboring schwa, or by the inability of the speaker to manage the limited duration of speaking. Beside schwa sounds, other particular sounds, when placed in a particular position will likely to be elided. For example, the plosive alveolar sounds such as /t/ and /d/ are quite difficult to pronounce when those sounds are placed after the liquid sounds or after the nasal sound. This consonant elision occurs as the way of Sri Mulyani in maintaining the speed of her speech in order to make the pronunciation easier (Firdhani, Indrayani, and Mahdi 2018). Elision is more often used in informal situations with the function to produce a simple result of speaking that is easier for the speaker to pronounce and easy to understand for the listener. Besides, elision can also be found especially in presentations or formal situations depending on context (Nasrulloh, Yasri, and Kareviati 2019).

Owusu Ansah (2020) in a study of elision in Esahie, also known as Sehwi, a Kwa language spoken in the Western North region of Ghana found that elision might happen to sound segments, syllables and tones. Elision, as of type of the syllable structures changes that occur in rapid speech because of sounds influencing each other, is influenced not only by phonological aspect, but also morphological factors such as vowel juxtapositioning during compounding, and at word boundary.

As most studies link elision with fast speech rate, Andana (2018) separated the cause of elision between cultural aspect (the dialect) and the speech rate aspect. The study found that the productivity of elisions in the Eminem's Offended sub-verses were not affected by speech rate, but a dialect since 80 percent of elisions were underlain by BEV (Black English Vernacular).

In linguistics terminology, an elision in word-initial position or from the beginning of a word is known as aphaeresis, in word-medial position or from the interior part of a word as syncope, and in word-final position or from the end of a word as apocope (Crystal 2008). Bussmann (1998) elaborates aphaeresis or aphesis as the loss of initial vowel, consonant, or syllable, as in *opossum* ~ *possum*, or the loss of initial [k] before [n] in *knee* and *knight*, syncope as the loss of an unstressed vowel (or a consonant) within a word such as in the pronunciation of *medicine* as /'medsin/ and *library* as /'laibri/, and apocope as the loss of a final vowel, consonant, or syllable, as in the pronunciation of the noun *comb* as /ko:m/ where the final consonant /b/ is disappeared.

As it was mentioned above, elision can occur on sounds level such as vowels or consonants in a word and even on syllable level. A syllable is a unit of spoken language that is bigger than a speech sound and contains one or more vowels or of a syllabic consonant alone or of either with one or more consonant sounds preceding or following (Anon 2021). Crystal (2008) defines a syllable as a unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word. A word may be pronounced 'syllable at a time', as in *ne-ver-the-less*, and a good dictionary will indicate where these syllabic divisions occur in writing, thus providing information about how a word may be hyphenated. A syllable is a phonological unit consisting of one or more sounds or phonemes, including a peak (or nucleus) (Finegan 2004) and the coda and onset (Fromkin, Blair, and Collins 2000). For example, the word *big* in English is a monosyllabic word which has only one syllable, consisting of 'i' as the nucleus, the preceding consonants 'b' as the onset and the following consonant 'g' as the coda. Meanwhile, the English word *raptor* is a disyllabic word which has two syllables 'rap' and 'tor'. The vowels in each syllable are the nucleus and the preceding and following consonants are the onset and coda respectively. Other words might also be polysyllabic with more than two syllables such as *beautiful* which has three syllables.

In Bahasa Indonesia, a syllable is defined as the smallest rhythmic unit in a speech sound (Pujiastuti and Kulup 2016), a structure that is formed by one or a sequence of phonemes that are the constituents of a word (Anon 2016; Kridalaksana 2008). As in English, it also consists of *puncak* or the nucleus, an onset, and a *koda* or the coda (Chaer 2009). There are eleven syllable patterns in Bahasa Indonesia. Among others are (i) V: a-ku, (ii) VK: il-mu, (iii) KV: ka-mu, and (iv) KVK: pak-sa. The V refers to vowels or vocal sounds while the K represent 'konsonan' or consonant sounds. The underlined syllables are the examples of each respective pattern. For example, the word *aku* is a disyllabic word which has 2 syllables. The first syllable only has a nucleus 'a'. meanwhile, the second syllable has an onset 'k' and a nucleus 'u'.

This study is aimed at describing and analyzing elision in the use of Bahasa Indonesia in informal context in Waingapu, a city in eastern Indonesia. As in other eastern Indonesia cities, the way people speak in Waingapu is also characterized by a fast speech phenomenon, with rapid speed and elision. It can be said that one of the traits of eastern Indonesian people's dialect is fast speech. People speak at a rapid speed with many shortened words and phrases, for example the verb 'pergi' /pergi/ is shortened to 'pi' /pi/. This study will analyze the shortened forms of words and phrases, excluding the calculation of the speech rate. It will be focused only on the

changes occurring in words and phrases, the original forms and the derivational forms as results of shortened, deletion, or elision process.

Waingapu is located in Sumba Island where several languages are spoken. In Waingapu, besides Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, people also speak Kampera and other local languages. Apart from the local languages, in the use of Bahasa Indonesia, people show that the way they use it is different from people in other parts of Indonesia, especially in the western Indonesia areas. Besides rapid speech, they are also indicated by a high tone of speaking. In formal places such as school or government offices, Bahasa Indonesia is used as a means of communication. However, it is not always used in a formal way of speaking. As with other languages, different situations may trigger different ways of speaking between speakers. One apparent characteristic of informal ways of speaking in Waingapu is the deletion or elision of words and phrases which resulted in shortened forms.

METHOD

This study is a descriptive qualitative study which will elaborate the phenomena of elision that occurs in the personal pronouns of Bahasa Indonesia used in Waingapu. Although elision does occur on other classes of words such as on verbs, this study focused more on personal pronouns and possessive structure of subject and possessive verb 'punya' or 'to have' in English. The data was all oral use of language collected through note-taking at various places such as campus, house, restaurants, market, stores, and public parks. By applying a distributional method, the data collected was then selected using a direct element categorization technique which will divide words and phrases in a sentence to categorize them based on their classes of words and their parts of speech in the sentences. After that, to see how elision works, the data will be compared to actual pronunciation of words and phrases to see how the elision affects and changes the words.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section focuses on the elision, the process, and the results. As the focus is on personal pronouns and possessive structure, this section will be divided into two parts respectively for each. Table 1 is the list of pronouns and possessive structure in a sentence which are the focus of this study. There are 6 pronouns and 6 possessive structures alongside with additional information on the equivalent forms in English. The elision result column shows the elision result of each form.

Table 1 List of Pronoun and Possessive Structure

| No | Personal Pronoun/ Possessive Structure | Meaning in English |
|-----|---|--|
| 1) | Saya | 1 st person singular (<i>I</i>) |
| 2) | Kau | 2 nd person singular (<i>you</i>) |
| 3) | Dia | 3 rd person singular (<i>he/she/it</i>) |
| 4) | Dorang | 3 rd person plural (<i>they</i>) |
| 5) | Kamu | 2 nd person plural (<i>you, pl</i>) |
| 6) | Kita | 1 st person plural (<i>we</i>) |
| 7) | Saya punya | <i>My...</i> |
| 8) | Kau punya | <i>Your...</i> |
| 9) | Dia punya | <i>Her.../His...</i> |
| 10) | Dorang punya | <i>Their...</i> |
| 11) | Kamu punya | <i>Your...</i> |
| 12) | Kita punya | <i>Our...</i> |

Personal Pronouns Elision

Personal pronoun in Bahasa Indonesia is called as *pronominal persona* which consists of pronouns that refer to persons, usually used in sentence to replace and refer the noun of a person. For example, the pronoun *dia* (*she*) is used to refer to a woman named Dita. From the list on Table 1 above, it can be seen that all the personal pronouns are disyllabic, meaning that they are constituted of 2 syllables. As syllables also function to help syllabic division, below is a short explanation on how the 6 personal pronouns are divided based on *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*.

Table 2 Personal Pronouns and Elision Results

| No. | Personal Pronoun | Syllable Division | Elision Result |
|-----|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1) | Saya | sa - ya | Sa |
| 2) | Kau | ka - u | Ko |
| 3) | Dia | di - a | De |
| 4) | Dorang | do - rang | Dong |
| 5) | Kamu | ka - mu | Kam |
| 6) | Kita | ki - ta | Kit |

From the data in Table 2 above, it can be seen that all the disyllabic personal pronouns have changed into monosyllabic words after the elision process. It means that all the second syllables (except for *dorang*) in the original words are elided. The first is for the 1st person singular pronoun *saya* which is elided to ‘sa’ and the ‘ya’ is omitted. The example can be seen in sentence (a) *Sa malas* (“saya malas”) or (b) *Pulang deng sa saja* (“Pulang dengan saya saja”). For this pronoun, the elision process is simply omitting the second syllable and leaving the first syllable as the only syllable with a nucleus and an onset. This word experiences an apocope elision because the sounds omitted are from the end of the word.

The 2nd person and 3rd person singular undergo a slightly different process. The pronoun *kau* changes into *ko* as in (c) *ko di mana?* (“kau di mana?”) or in (d) *sa kira ko yang datang* (“saya kira kau yang datang”). The second syllable ‘u’ is omitted and leaves the first syllable alone. However, there is another process of sound change where the /a/ in *ka* is changed into /o/ and the word becomes *ko*. The pronoun *dia* changes into *de* as in (e) *de minta sa yang bayar?* (“dia minta saya yang bayar”) or in (f) *de deng saya sama-sama* (“dia dengan saya sama-sama”). The second syllable ‘a’ is omitted and leaves the first syllable alone. However, the sound change process also occurs where the /i/ in *di* is changed into /e/ and the word becomes *de*. The remaining syllable has a nucleus and an onset. It is the apocope that occurs since the sounds lost are those from the end part of the words.

The word *dorang* is the pronoun which refers to the 3rd plural persona. It has the same meaning with the pronoun ‘mereka’ (‘they’ in English) and is used by people in eastern Indonesia. The examples are in (g) *dong tidak kasih info kemarin* (“dorang tidak kasih info kemarin”) or in (h) *besok saja sama-sama deng dong yang lain* (“besok saja sama-sama dengan dorang yang lain”). For this pronoun, the case is syncope elision because it is not the second syllable which is omitted but two sounds in the middle of the words. Viewing the syllable structure, originally this word is divided into ‘do’ with /o/ as the nucleus and /d/ as the onset and ‘rang’ with /a/ as the nucleus, /r/ as the onset, and /ng/ as the coda. When the elision happens and the two sounds /r/ and /a/ are lost, it leaves the word with only 1 syllable. The word *dong* has the /o/ as the nucleus, the /d/ as the onset, and the /ng/ as the coda.

Kamu refers to 2nd plural persona and *kita* refers to 1st plural persona. In English, they are the ‘you’ for the plural form and ‘we’. Take the examples (i) *kam pi mana?* (“kamu pergi mana?”) and (j) *kit tir tau cara kerjanya* (“kita tidak tahu cara kerjanya”). These two pronouns experience apocope elision where the last sounds are lost. The originally disyllabic words change into monosyllabic forms. *Kamu* is originally have two syllables of ‘ka’ and ‘mu’. The elision omits the /u/ at the end of the word and the consonant /m/ moves and joins the first syllable. The monosyllabic word *kam* has /a/ as the nucleus, the /k/ as the onset, and the /m/ as the coda. The /m/ sound previously acts as the onset of the second syllable. The pronoun *kita* also experiences the same process where the elision omits the /a/ at the end and the consonant /t/ joins the first syllable. The word *kit* has /i/ as the nucleus, the /k/ as the onset, and the /t/ as the coda. Previously, the /t/ sound is the onset of the second syllable.

From the analysis above, it can be inferred that personal pronouns experience two types of elision, the apocope and the syncope elision with different kinds of process. All the elision process resulted in forming monosyllabic words which were originally disyllabic. From the examples, it can also be seen that besides personal pronouns, some other classes of word are also experience elision such as the verb *pergi*, *tahu*, and *mau* which change into *pi*, *tau*, and *mo*, the adverb *dengan* which changes into *deng*, and the negation adverb *tidak* which changes into *tir*. Some of the elision products may fill the subject and object position in a sentence as *sa* in (b), *ko* in (h), and *dong* in (d). Other elided pronouns can only position as subject of a sentence as the data and analysis of this study show. However, there might be few infrequent uses of these forms as objects.

Possessive Structure Elision

Possessive structure here refers to the structure of phrases which usually exist in possessive pronoun phrases in Bahasa Indonesia. In English, all possessive pronouns consist of one whole word with one syllable or more such as *my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *their*, and *our*. In Bahasa Indonesia, there are two ways of expressing it as in (k)

rumah saya or (1) *saya punya rumah*. Both sentences are translated in English as ‘my house’. In Waingapu and in mostly all eastern Indonesia regions, the second phrase structure is usually preferred by speakers. However, the (1) *saya punya rumah* might be seen as both a sentence and a phrase. As a sentence it means ‘I have a house’ and as a phrase, it means ‘my house’. The focus of this study is on the latter which is related to possessive phrases.

The verb *punya* means ‘to have’. For this verb alone, it usually experiences elision, where (1) the last sound /a/ is omitted and the /ny/ sound is changed into /ng/ and the word becomes *pung*, or (2) *pung* later changed into *pu* where the /ng/ sound is elided. This verb is usually present in the possessive forms such as in (m) *Sa pung tas masih di dalam* (“saya punya tas masih di dalam”) and in (n) *De pu sodara yang datang* (“dia punya saudara yang datang”). In (m), *sa pung tas* is a noun phrase which means ‘my bag’ where *tas* is the head and *sa pung* are the modifiers. In (n), *de pu sodara* (‘his brother’) is a noun phrase where *sodara* is the head and *de pu* are the modifiers. It can be seen from these two examples that the word *punya* is elided into *pung* and *pu*. Following explanation is arranged for each complete phrase structure based on Table 3.

Table 3 Possessive Structure and Elision Results

| No | Possessive Structure | Elision Result | | | |
|----|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------|---------|
| | | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 |
| 1) | Kita punya | Kita pung | Kita pu /Kit pung | | |
| 2) | Dorang punya | Dong pung | Dong pu | Do pu | |
| 3) | Kamu punya | Kamu pung | Kamu pu | Kam pu | |
| 4) | Saya punya | Sa pung | Sa pu | Sap | Sam |
| 5) | Kau punya | Ko pung | Ko pu | Kop | Kom |
| 6) | Dia punya | De pung | De pu | Dep | Dem |

Table 3 presents the list of possessive forms and the derivational elision results of the forms. It can be seen from the table that each form may experience 2 to 4 stages of elision. All the forms are basically the possessive pronouns. (1) *saya punya*, or *my* in English, refers to the possessive pronoun of the first singular person, (2) *kau punya* refers to the possessive pronoun of the second singular person (*your*), (3) *dia punya* or *her/his/its* refers to the possessive pronoun of the third singular person, (4) *dorang punya* or *their* refers to the possessive pronoun of the third plural person, (5) *kamu punya* refers to the possessive pronoun of the second plural person or *your* in English, and (6) *kita punya* is the possessive pronoun of the first plural person or *our* in English. These forms consist of the pronoun and the word *punya*.

In level 1, each component experiences elision where all the pronouns are elided as it was explained in the previous part and the word *punya* is elided into *pung*. In the second level, the pronouns’ elided forms are still the same but the *pung* is changed into *pu* where the *ng* sound is elided. Except for the first possessive structure, in the second level, it resulted in two forms: *kita pu* and *kit pung*. The example can be seen in (o) *kita pung masalah semua tau* (“kita punya masalah semua (orang) tahu”), in (p) *kita pu foto yang di Facebook* (“kita punya foto yang di Facebook”), or in (q) *kit pung makanan belum ada* (“kita punya makanan belum ada”). There is no third level for this structure. The second level shows that each one of the components change but not at the same time. When elision changes *kita pung* to *kita pu*, it only omits the *ng* sound from *pung*. When elision happens to *kita pung* to *kit pung*, it only changes the pronoun *kita* to *kit* by omitting the /a/ sound. Each of these two forms are the elision results of the phrase *kita pung*.

The second and the third forms experience three stages of elision with the first and second level being the same with other possessive pronouns. In level three, one sound of the pronoun is omitted, the *ng* in the *dong* and /u/ in *kamu*. It resulted in *do pu* as in (r) *do pu mama yang sakit* (“dorang punya mama yang sakit”) and *kam pu* as in (s) *kam pu tugas sudah selesai?* (“kamu punya tugas sudah selesai?”).

The possessive structure *saya punya*, *kau punya* and *dia punya* experiences four levels of elision. However, on the second and third stage, not like the other possessive structures, they create new words for each respective possessive pronoun. *Saya punya* goes through the elision process and changes to *sa pung*, *sa pu*, *sap*, and *sam*. The example can be seen in (t) *sap laptop masih rusak* (“saya punya laptop masih rusak”) or in (u) *sam kawan yang kasih pinjam* (“saya punya kawab yang kasih pinjam”). In the third stage, the *u* is omitted and leaves the sound *p* alone which then joins the pronoun *sa* and becomes *sap*. This form later changes into *sam* where the /p/ is changed into /m/. The next two possessive structure also undergo the same process, where in level three, the final *u* is omitted and leave the sound *p* alone which then joins the pronoun *ko* and *de* resulting in *kop* and *dep*. The final /p/ is later changed into /m/ and becomes *kom* and *dem*. The examples are in (v) *kom uang masih ada?* (“kau punya uang masih ada?”) and in (w) *dem tugas masih banyak* (“dia punya tugas masih banyak”). The elision process for these 3 possessive pronouns resulted in creating of new forms of possessive pronouns which consist

of only one component instead of two components as the original forms. The elision process makes the possessive structure change from phrases to words.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis there are several conclusions that can be inferred. First, in terms of pronouns, the syllable elision can occur in all pronouns which is shown by the omission of the second syllable or at least its final sound. The elided forms come from various processes. (1) when the second syllable is omitted, the first syllable is left as the original form as in *saya* to *sa*. (2) when the second syllable is omitted, the vowel (nucleus) of the first syllable changes to another vowel sound as in *dia* to *de*. (3) When the elision happens only to the final sound of the second syllable (nucleus) and leaving the onset, then it will join the first syllable as coda as in *kamu* to *kam*. Some elided pronouns such as *sa*, *ko*, and *dong* can be used as both subject and object in a sentence.

Second, with regard to possessive pronouns, the most commonly used phrase is the forms with the pronouns followed by the verb *punya*. These forms such as in *saya punya* is basically a possessive phrase as in English possessive pronoun *my*. The elision process occurs to each component of the pronouns and the word *punya* and through different levels. Some may experience 2 stages of elision, some 3 and 4 stages. The possessive phrases of *saya punya*, *kau punya*, and *dia punya* experience 4 stages and in the third and fourth stages they form new words instead of phrases such as in *sap*, *sam*, *kop*, *kom*, *dep*, and *dem*.

Third, in terms of the causes of elision, as it was explained in the introduction, it might be the product of rapid speech or speaking at a fast speech rate. This type of speaking is a key feature of informal or casual situations. As it was mentioned, the use of Bahasa Indonesia in Waingapu in formal places such as schools and offices also apply the informal manner as it is in casual situations such as at home. Comparing to the BEV (Black English Vernacular), which is a dialect of English spoken by certain group of black community in certain part of America and has been studied a lot, the use of Bahasa Indonesia in Waingapu and other eastern part of Indonesia has not been researched much. The distinctive use of Bahasa Indonesia might be seen as a different dialect of the standard Indonesian or from the use of Bahasa Indonesia in other parts of the country. However, this so-called dialect has not been defined broadly and deeply in terms of its linguistics features including speech rate and phonological processes as elision. Thus, this study can not determine whether the elision is affected by the speech rate or the dialect as it was suggested by Andana (2018). Nevertheless, in order to define a dialect, all linguistics features must be identified and included as characteristics of the dialect. It means that rapid speech, and elision and its derivational results are also the features of the dialects.

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