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Toward a Refined Understanding of Cluster Reduction: Phonotactic Innovation and Elision in Bangkalanese Madurese

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the phenomenon of elision in the vocabulary of the Bangkalan dialect of Madurese, a feature that reveals both systematic regularities and sporadic irregularities in its phonological structure. The investigation addresses the principles underlying elision that occur in a patterned manner as well as those that emerge unpredictably, thus pointing to deeper complexities in the dialect's phonetic/phonemic system. The data were elicited from two native speakers of the Bangkalan dialect through structured interviews using an instrument originally designed by Nothofer and later refined by Laksono and Savitri (2009). The recordings were transcribed phonetically to facilitate analysis, after which the forms were closely examined to classify their elision status and taxonomy. The analysis identified seven types of elision-based phonological processes: apheresis, syncope, vowel cluster reduction, initial syllable reduction, apocope, final syllable reduction, and double syllable reduction. Among these, syncope emerges as the most influential, contributing to the proliferation of consonant clusters that distinguish Bangkalan Madurese from other dialects. Furthermore, the three reduction processes, initial, final, and double syllable reduction, play a role in shortening lexical items, thereby shaping a vocabulary that is characteristically more compact than that of other Madurese varieties. These findings underscore the interaction between systematic phonological tendencies and irregular developments, positioning Bangkalan Madurese as a dialect that simultaneously preserves, reshapes, and mystifies the broader landscape of Madurese phonology.

Keywords: elision principles, phonological processes, phonemes, syllables.

INTRODUCTION

As a vernacular language, Madurese ranks as the fourth most widely spoken local language in Indonesia (Davies, 2010), with an estimated 13.7 million speakers (Lauder, 2004). Within everyday life, Madurese is employed in diverse ways, reflecting variations that can broadly be categorized by geographical distribution and social stratification. Variations arising from geographical factors are identified as dialects, whereas those shaped by social factors are classified as social dialects or sociolects. Through systematic inquiry, dialectologists have long sought to classify the internal diversity of Madurese by establishing dichotomies and assigning specific labels such as the Bangkalan (Bangkalanese), Pamekasan (Pamekasanese), Sumenep (Sumenepese), and Kangean (Kangeanese) dialects (Penninga & Hendrik, 1942; Sugianto et al., 1981–1982; Wibisono et al., 2001). The first three dialects are spoken on Madura Island, while the Kangean dialect is regarded as an extended variety used on several smaller surrounding islands. These categorizations have provided a framework for mapping the language's spatial varieties. My own research in 2018, though primarily concerned with the dynamics of social dialects on Madura Island, further substantiated these earlier classifications. The findings demonstrated that the speech of different regencies, most notably Bangkalan, Pamekasan, and Sumenep, retains distinct dialectal features, thereby reaffirming the dialectological boundaries recognized in prior studies (Azhar & Febrianto, 2008).

This study examines the Bangkalan dialect (Bangkalanese in short), selected for its distinct linguistic features that present considerable analytical challenges. A salient characteristic is the negation marker *lo'*, which corresponds to "no" or "not" in English, whereas other Madurese dialects conventionally employ *ta'* for the same function (Wibisono et al., 2001). Bangkalanese also demonstrates another distinct linguistic feature. The feature is the phenomenon of word shortening, which systematically reduces syllabic length relative to the other dialects. Wibisono et al. (2001) observe that speakers of the Pamekasan dialect typically articulate all syllables, while Sumenep speakers frequently append a segment to the final syllable. In contrast, Bangkalanese speakers exhibit a pronounced tendency toward syllabic reduction. The following dataset offers illustrative examples of this phonological reduction, highlighting the dialect's distinct articulatory characteristics.

Table 1. Word shortening in Bangkalanese Madurese

NO	Words in Madurese			Meaning in English
	Bangkalanese	Pamekasanese	Sumenepese	
1	*stiyah*	*satèya*	*satèya*	'now'
2	*klèbun*	*kalèbun*	*kalèbun*	'chief of a village'
3	*mloloh*	*maloloh*	*maloloh*	'always'
4	*mèrèh*	*komèrèh*	*komèrèh*	'candle nut'
5	*ghludhuk*	*ghâludhuk*	*ghâludhuk*	'thunder'

The data presented in the table illustrate five examples of Madurese vocabulary as pronounced by speakers from three distinct regions. Notably, Bangkalanese speakers exhibit systematic syllable reduction (elision), resulting in shorter word forms compared to the other dialects. This pattern is regular which demonstrates a consistent phonological process within the Bangkalan dialect. Consequently, Bangkalanese vocabulary tends to be reduced in syllabic length and incorporates a higher frequency

of consonant clusters, a feature that appears unprecedented among other local dialects or Austronesian languages examined to date. This distinctive phonological phenomenon warrants further investigation, particularly to uncover the systematic elision patterns that characterize the Bangkalan dialect.

The observed linguistic variations in Bangkalanese are influenced by the geographical position of Bangkalan Regency. Located at the western tip of Madura, this region is relatively distant from the historical centers of Madurese cultural and linguistic influence, such as Sumenep Regency, which was formerly the heart of the ancient Madura kingdom. This relative distance has rendered Bangkalan more receptive to linguistic innovation. Additionally, Bangkalan lies within a transitional zone between two distinct dialects of different languages, Pamekasan dialect and Surabaya-Javanese dialect, resulting in mutual influences that further shape the features of Bangkalanese. Consequently, the distinct phonological and lexical characteristics of this dialect can be understood as the product of both geographical positioning and dialectal contact.

Prior research has examined variations within the Madurese language, including studies by Soetoko et al. (1986, 1998), Azhar and Febrianto (2014), Sugianto et al. (1981–1982), Wibisono et al. (2001), and Sugiharti (2020). These investigations primarily focused on tracing the dialectological status of language variants across Madura Island. However, a review of the literature reveals that limited study has specifically investigated the phenomenon of elision in the Bangkalanese Madurese dialect or examined the principles governing it. This absence identifies a clear scholarly gap, which the present study seeks to address. To address this gap, the present study focuses specifically on the distinctive feature of Bangkalanese, namely, the elision phenomenon. This study maps the principles governing elision in the dialect and examines instances of sporadic elision, thereby providing a detailed and previously underexplored account of this unique linguistic feature.

METHODS

The data for this study were obtained from two native speakers of Bangkalanese Madurese. The informants were interviewed to elicit Madurese vocabulary using an instrument originally developed by Nothofer and subsequently adapted by Laksono and Savitri (2009), comprising 829 glosses of words and phrases. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the participants' responses were transcribed using phonetic notation to ensure accessibility and readability for further analysis.

The transcriptions were subsequently compiled into a data corpus. Once the corpus was established, the vocabulary was compared with entries in the standard Madurese language dictionary to identify deviations, which were marked as lexical variations. These documented variations were then examined to identify instances of elision. Vocabulary exhibiting elision was further categorized according to established phonological and linguistic taxonomies, drawing upon the frameworks proposed by Crowle (1992), Campbell (2013), Gimson (1975), Skandera and Burleigh (2011), and O'Grady et al. (2017).

DISCUSSION

Phonotactics of Madurese Language

Before delving into the elision phenomena in Bangkalan dialect, it is essential to outline the general characteristics of Madurese phonotactics. Phonotactics refers to the set of rules governing permissible sequences of phonemes within a language, encompassing the principles that determine how sounds can combine and sequence to form larger linguistic units such as syllables and words (Celata & Calderone, 2015). The examples presented in this section are drawn from two primary sources: the data corpus collected from the study's informants and the Madurese language dictionary compiled by Pawitra (2009).

Madurese exhibits diverse sets of phonotactic patterns, reflected in both the number of syllables that constitute words and the array of sounds within each syllable. This diversity becomes even more pronounced when examining specific dialects, such as Bangkalanese, in comparison with other regional varieties. Phonologically, Madurese words are constructed around syllabic units. Following Nurhayati (2016), basic Madurese words can be classified into three primary types based on syllable count: monosyllabic, disyllabic, and trisyllabic words. A careful examination of the corpus, however, reveals the existence of quadrisyllabic words, although these occur less frequently than disyllabic or trisyllabic forms.

In monosyllabic words, a single vowel serves as the syllabic nucleus. Disyllabic words feature two nuclei, with each vowel occupying the central position of its respective syllable. Trisyllabic words contain three such nuclei, each anchoring a syllable, while quadrisyllabic words follow the same principle, with four vowels serving as the nuclei of four syllables. These syllabic structures form the foundation of Madurese phonology and provide the structural context in which phenomena such as elision occur. For detailed patterns of each word type, see the examples provided below.

Table 1. Word Structure Patterns in Madurese Language

Lexical Pattern		Madurese	Phonetic Transcription	English
One-Syllable Based Words	V	*é*	[ɛ]	'in'
	CV	*sé*	[sɛ]	'which'
		ka	[ka]	'to'
	CVC	*san*	[san]	'if'
		ghun	[gʰun]	'only'
Two-Syllable Based Words	V–CV	*obâ*	[ɔbɤ]	'change'
		ota	[ɔta]	'throw up'
	V –VC	*aéng*	[aiŋ]	'water'
		aop	[aɔp]	'cozy'
	CV– V	*pao*	[paɔ]	'mango'
		jhâu	[ʤʰau]	'far'
	CV– VC	*dâun*	[dɤun]	'leave'
		taon	[taɔn]	'year'
	V – CVC	*oréng*	[ɔrɛŋ]	'person'
		énom	[ɛnɔm]	'drink'
	CV– CV	*maca*	[maca]	'read'

		marè	[marɛ]	‘already done’
	VC– CV	*ongghâ*	[ɔŋg^{h}ɤ]	‘climb’
		ongghu	[ɔŋg^{h}u]	‘intentionally’
	VC – CVC	*ella’*	[əllaʔ]	'one after another
		accəm	[accem]	‘tamarind’
	CV– CVC	*maléng*	[malɛŋ]	‘thief’
		ramo’	[ramɔʔ]	‘root’
	CVC – CV	*ketto*	[kettɔ]	‘turbid’
		bâcca	[bɤcca]	‘wet’
	CVC – CVC	*bâllu’*	[bɤlluʔ]	‘eight’
		sandur	[sandor] ‘	‘Madurese traditional music’
	CVC – CCV	*mantra*	[mantrɛ]	‘male nurse’
		mantra	[mantra]	‘spell’
	CVC – CCVC	*kambrat*	[kambrat]	‘traditional religious gathering’
		sokklat	[sɔkklat]	‘cocoa’
	CCVC-V	*ghrâ’â*	[ghrɤʔɤ]	‘eclipse’
	CCVC-CV	*ghrindhâ*	[ghrindhɤ]	‘grinder’
		prenca	[prənca]	‘divide into groups’
	CCVC-CVC	*jhrungngep*	[ʤ^{h}ruŋ-ŋəp]	‘fall over’
		ghlebbher	[ghləbbhər]	‘flutter’
Three-Syllable Based Words	CV–CV–CVC	*ghâludhuk*	[g^{h}ɤlud^{h}uk]	‘thunder’
		ghâladhâk	[g^{h}ɤlɤd^{h}ɤk]	‘bridge’
	CVC–CV–CV	*jhârghâjhi*	[ʤ^{h}ɤrg^{h}ɤʤ^{h}i]	‘saw’
		bhâbbhuru	[b^{h}ɤbb^{h}uru] ‘kelelawar	‘bat’
	CVC–CV–CVC	*bhângsalan*	[b^{h}ɤŋsalan]	‘Madurese traditional pun’
		ghentongan	[ghəntɔŋan]	‘a type of batik’
	CV–CVC–CVC	*jârângkong*	[ʤɤraŋkoŋ]	‘a type of ghost (skeleeton’
		bâlâttang	[bɤlɤttaŋ]	‘river crab’
	VC–CV–CV	*ompama*	[ɔmpama]	‘if’

		andhâru	[and^{h}ɤru]	‘fire ball/meteor’
	V–CV–CV	*ibâdâ*	[ibɤdɤ]	‘worship’
		otabâ	[ɔtabɤ]	‘or’
	V-CV-CVC	*acora’*	[acɔraʔ]	‘look like’
		akadi’	[akadiʔ]	‘look like’
Four Syllable Based Words	CV-CV-V-CV	*mataarè*	[mataarɛ]	‘sun’
	CV-CV-CV-CVC	*kalèmongan*	[kalɛmɔŋan]	‘arm pit’
	CV-CVC-CV-CV	*kabertana*	[kabərtana]	‘viper’

An examination of the lexical structures presented above reveals a salient phonological phenomenon that characterizes Madurese vocabulary. Specifically, the language exhibits a notable presence of (1) vowel sequences (vowel clusters) and (2) consonant groupings (consonant clusters) across a wide range of lexical items. These structural configurations distinguish Madurese from other Austronesian languages, such as Javanese, Balinese, and Sundanese, which display more restricted cluster patterns. These two features appear to be closely associated with the elision phenomenon observed in Bangkalanese Madurese, suggesting an intrinsic relationship between the phonotactic profile of the language and the processes of syllabic reduction.

In Madurese, vowel clusters are defined as sequences of two or more vowels that occur in succession. These vowels are distributed across distinct syllables, thereby preserving their individual phonemic status rather than forming diphthongs. When the cluster consists of identical vowels, such as [a] + [a] or [u] + [u], the sequence is separated by a glottal stop [ʔ], which serves as a syllabic boundary marker. In contrast, when the cluster involves non-identical vowels, such as [a] + [i], no glottal stop intervenes, and the vowels appear in direct succession. Representative examples are provided below.

Tabel 2 Vowel Clusters in Madurese Language

Vowels	Words	Transcription	English
[a a]	*sa’ang*	[saʔ aŋ]	‘pepper’
	ca’ang	[caʔ aŋ]	‘fish gills’
[a i]	*ghâi’*	[g^{h}ɤiʔ]	‘to take something in a high place by using a tool like a stick’
	jhâi’	[ʤ^{h}ɤiʔ]	‘sew’
[a ɛ]	*paé’*	[paɛʔ]	‘bitter’
	saé	[saɛ]	‘good’
[ɤ u]	*bâu*	[bɤu]	‘smell’
	jhâu	[ʤ^{h}ɤu]	‘far’
[u u]	*dhu’um*	[dhu’um]	‘share something’
	bu’u’	[buʔ uʔ]	‘powder’
[a ɔ]	*pao*	[paɔ]	‘mango’
	lao’	[laɔʔ]	‘south’

[ɔ ɔ]	*so'on*	[sɔʔɔn]	'carrying something by placing it on top of the head'
	ro'om	[rɔʔɔm]	'fregrant'

A consonant cluster in Madurese is defined as the occurrence of two consonants in sequence within a single lexical item, each occupying a distinct syllabic position. Specifically, the first consonant constitutes the coda of the preceding syllable, while the second consonant functions as the onset of the subsequent syllable. When the first consonant is a voiced stop, such as [b], the following consonant is frequently accompanied by a glottal articulation, yielding [b^{h}]. In cases where the initial consonant is [d], the subsequent consonant may either remain as [d] or be realized with an additional glottal feature, resulting in [d^{h}]. Illustrative examples are provided below.

Tabel 3. Consonant Clusters in Madurese Language

Consonants	Words	Transcription	English
[b b]	*lebbhâ'*	[ləbb^{h}ɤʔ]	'thick (for tree)'
	kabbhi	[kabb^{h}i]	'all'
[c c]	*beccé'*	[beccɛʔ]	'nice, kind'
	leccet	[ləccət]	'packed'
[d d]	*keddi'*	[kəddiʔ]	'timid'
	paddhu	[padd^{h}u]	'corner'
[g g]	*alegget*	[aləggət]	'curved'
	teggor	[təggɔr]	'reprimand'
[k k]	*lekkas*	[ləkkas]	'hurry, fast'
	bukka'	[bukkaʔ]	'open'
[l l]	*ella*	[əlla]	'no, do not'
	bâllu'	[bɤlluʔ]	'eight'
[m m]	*kamma*	[kamma]	'where'
	rammé	[rammɛ]	'crowded'
[n n]	*kennéng*	[kənnɛŋ]	'being hit'
	sennar	[sənnar]	'strings'
[ŋ ŋ]	*langngoy*	[laŋŋɔy]	'swim'
	langngé'	[laŋŋɛʔ]	'sky'
[n ñ]	*tennyeng*	[tənñəŋ]	'tense'
	annyong	[an ñɔŋ]	'too watery'
[p p]	*gheppa'*	[g^{h}əppaʔ]	'pat'
	eppa'	[əppaʔ]	'father'
[r r]	*kerrong*	[kərrɔŋ]	'miss (to regret that a person or thing is not present'
	kerré'	[kərrɛʔ]	'rice crust'
[s s]	*essa*	[essa]	'legitimate'
	éssé	[ɛssɛ]	'contain'
[t t]	*pettah*	[pəttah]	'utterance'
	betta	[bətta]	'feel at home

Building upon the foregoing discussion of phonotactic principles, it is possible to delineate seven fundamental phonological principles that govern the permissible combinations of phonemes in the Madurese language. These principles serve as the

underlying framework that determines how individual phonemes may be systematically arranged to form linguistically valid and meaningful lexical items. In other words, they represent the structural constraints that regulate syllable construction, phoneme sequencing, and the distribution of sounds across different positions within a word. The principles are enumerated as follows.

Tabel 4. Phonotactics Principles of Madurese Language

1	The number of syllables constituting the structure of a Madurese word is determined by the number of vowels present within that word.
2	A Madurese word must consist of at least one phoneme, which is obligatorily a vowel.
3	The minimal structure of a Madurese word comprises one syllable, whereas the maximal structure consists of four syllables.
4	Words in Madurese may begin with either a vowel or a consonant and may likewise terminate in either a vowel or a consonant.
5	The maximal occurrence of vowels within a vowel cluster is two, and such clusters may appear only in the second or third syllable of a word.
6	The maximal occurrence of consonants within a consonant cluster is two, and such clusters may appear only in the second and third syllables of a word.
7	A single Madurese word may contain no more than four vowels and five consonants.

Elision in Bangkalanese Madurese

The phonotactic principles outlined above constitute the general parameters underlying the formation of Madurese lexical items. These principles are applied in several canonical dictionaries, including the Madurese language dictionary published by the East Java Language Center, which is widely utilized by the Madurese community, as well as dictionaries that adopt the eastern Madurese dialects as their standard framework of compilation.

Notably, however, when speakers from Bangkalan Regency employ their local dialect, certain standardized rules are not consistently observed. As indicated in the introduction, Bangkalan speakers exhibit distinctive realizations of these phonotactic principles, giving rise to a variety of phonological manifestations. These variations form the basis of what is widely recognized as Bangkalanese, or the Bangkalan dialect of the Madurese language. One salient feature frequently cited as a stereotype of this dialect is the high frequency of phoneme elision. This process often results in lexical forms that are noticeably more concise and simplified compared to the equivalent words in other Madurese dialects.

Elision is commonly regarded as the most extreme manifestation of the lenition process, whereby a segment is weakened to the point of complete deletion (Carr, 1993). Ibrahim (2016) strengthens this definition by noting that elision is understood as the omission of sounds or the incomplete articulation of segments during fluent speech. Similarly, Katamba (1989) defines elision as the process of omitting sounds or segments in connected speech, emphasizing that both consonants and vowels are subject to this phenomenon and that, in some cases, entire sound sequences may be elided, particularly in post-lexical representations.

The phenomenon of elision is not limited to individual consonants or vowels but may also extend to the omission of entire syllables (Gimson, 1975; Skandera & Burleigh, 2011). More specifically, Roach (2009) conceptualizes elision as the zero

realization of phonemes, occurring in particular phonological environments as a form of phoneme gradation that results in the loss of consonantal or vocalic segments. From a rhetorical perspective, Malak and Mahmoud (2011) provide further distinctions: elision at the initial position of a word is termed aphesis or prosiopesis, elision within the medial position is referred to as syncope, and elision at the final position of a word is known as apocope.

This section provides an explicit account of the elision phenomenon as produced by speakers of Bangkalanese, with particular attention to the principles of elision as they are applied to a variety of lexical items that are realized differently in this dialect compared to other varieties of Madurese. In discussing these differences, it is important to clarify the terminological choices adopted in this study. Specifically, the expression changes into, which is conventionally represented by the symbol (⇒) in phonological rules, is deliberately avoided. The use of this term carries the risk of suggesting that Bangkalanese Madurese represents a recently innovated variety within Madura, a claim that is not supported by existing dialectological scholarship. To date, no dialectologist has explicitly asserted that Bangkalanese is a younger or newly emergent variety. On the contrary, there remains a plausible possibility that Bangkalanese may in fact constitute a proto-dialect, from which other Madurese varieties subsequently evolved as a result of multiple linguistic and sociocultural factors. For this reason, rather than framing the observed differences as linear changes, I employ the terms 'shows variation,' 'differently realized,' or 'corresponds to,' represented by the symbol (≈), to more accurately capture the patterns of phonological variation characteristic of the Bangkalanese. This conceptualization underscores the view that Bangkalanese Madurese should not be regarded as a derivative innovation, but rather as a distinct and historically significant variety within the broader Madurese linguistic landscape.

On the basis of their regularity of occurrence, elision processes in Bangkalanese can be classified into two categories: systemic elision and sporadic elision. Systemic elision refers to processes that recur across multiple data points and can therefore be formalized and generalized through phonetic rules. In contrast, sporadic elision denotes processes that are attested only in isolated cases and, as such, resist generalization into formal phonetic rules. Although this study is intended as an introductory examination of the elision phenomenon in Bangkalanese, both systemic and sporadic processes are included and discussed. The inclusion of sporadic processes is justified on the grounds that these phenomena are prove to be systemic in nature. Their present classification as sporadic reflects limitations in the available dataset, particularly the restricted time frame in which the data were collected. It is therefore plausible that with more extensive and longitudinal investigation, enabling the collection of a broader range of lexical data, the processes currently designated as sporadic would reveal themselves as systematic patterns of elision.

A general examination of the dataset revealed the existence of three principal types of phonological processes in Bangkalanese Madurese, namely vowel elision, consonant elision, and syllable elision. These findings are consistent with the categorizations proposed by Gimson (1975) and Skandera and Burleigh (2011), who likewise identify these categories as the core types of elision. A more detailed investigation of the data, however, demonstrates that these three broad types may be further subdivided into more specific classifications, thereby allowing a finer-grained understanding of the elision phenomenon. All observable classifications of phonemic

alteration that are subsumed under the category of elision are presented in the catalogue below.

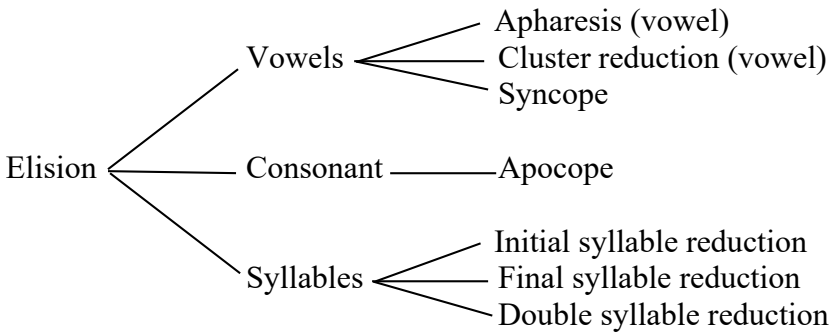

Figure 4. Bangkanese Madurese Elision Types

Apheresis. The first type of elision identified in the Bangkalanese is apheresis, a process that involves the deletion of an initial phoneme in a word. Crowle (1992) defines apheresis as the dissipation or omission of a segment that occurs in the word-initial position. Campbell (2013) similarly supports this conceptualization, stating that apheresis (from the Greek aphaíresis, literally 'a taking away') refers to phonological developments in which the initial sound of a word, often a vowel, is deleted. This process is not merely a matter of casual speech reduction but constitutes a patterned phenomenon that reflects deeper phonological tendencies within a dialect.

In the context of Bangkalanese, the collected data reveal three lexical items that serve as illustrative examples of this process. The consistent occurrence of apheresis across different tokens indicates that this type of elision is not random but rather follows a systematic phonological principle observable within the dialect. Such findings align with previous scholarly claims (e.g., Campbell, 2013; Crowle, 1992) that apheresis plays a role in shaping the historical and synchronic phonological profiles of languages.

1	*iyut* [ijot/ijjot]	≈	*yut* [jot]	'yes'
2	*iyâ(h)* [ijɤ(h)/ijɤ(h)]	≈	*yâ(h)* [jɤ(h)]	'yes'
3	*ela* [əla/əlla]	≈	*la* [la]	'already'

Note how to read the data.
A ≈ B A is realized differently in Bangkalanese as B or A corresponds to B

In the data sets labeled 1, 2, and 3, the elision process illustrates the phenomenon of apheresis, whereby the initial vowel segments are omitted in the Bangkalanese realization of Madurese words. Specifically, the vowels [i], and the mid-central vowel [ɤ], which occur in the initial position of the lexical items, are consistently realized as [Ø] (i.e., deleted or zero segments). These words are all characterized by a bisyllabic structure in which the first syllable begins with a vowel, thereby rendering the initial

segment particularly susceptible to elision. The deletion of these initial vowels does not alter the fundamental meaning of the words but instead reflects a dialect-specific phonotactic simplification that reduces the phonological complexity of word onsets. This phenomenon can be formally represented through a phonological rule that accounts for the deletion of initial vowels when they occur in a specific structural environment. The rule can be expressed as follows: V ≈ Ø / #_CV.

Syncope. The second type of systematic elision identified in Bangkalanese is syncope. Campbell (2013) defines syncope (from the Greek sunkopé 'a cutting away,' sun- 'with' + kopé 'cut, beat') as the deletion of a vowel from the medial position of a word, rather than from the initial or final position. He further illustrates this process through changes in many varieties of English, where the medial vowel is omitted in words such as fam(i)ly and mem(o)ry. Similarly, Crowle (1992) emphasizes that syncope frequently generates consonant clusters in languages that previously did not possess them, as medial vowel deletion brings consonants into adjacency.

Within the Bangkalan dialect, syncope predominantly occurs in basic lexical items composed of three or four syllables. A common pattern involves the deletion of the vowel [a], particularly when it occupies the nucleus of a medial syllable. The following examples illustrate this elision pattern.

4.	*kalèbun* [kalɛbun]	≈	*klèbun* [klɛbun]	'a chief of a village'
5.	*sariyang* [sariyaŋ]	≈	*sriyang* [sriyaŋ]	'the oldest child in a family
6.	*palotan* [palɔtan]	≈	*plotan* [plɔtan]	'sticky rice'
7.	*malarat* [malarat]	≈	*mlarat* [mlarat]	'difficult'

In data sets 4, 5, 6, and 7, the vowel [a] situated in the initial syllable consistently undergoes syncope, resulting in its deletion [Ø]. This process reduces the syllabic structure of the lexical items, thereby producing more compressed word forms. A further consequence of this elision is the emergence of consonant clusters such as [kl], [sr], [pl], and [ml], which arise through the removal of the intervening vowel between adjacent consonants. The process can be formally represented as: [a] ≈ [Ø] / C__CVCVC# that is, the low vowel [a] is deleted when positioned between two consonants in the initial environment of polysyllabic words (particularly those containing three or more syllables). This phenomenon exemplifies a defining phonological feature of Bangkalanese Madurese, demonstrating its tendency toward syllabic reduction and lexical compression through the systematic generation of consonant clusters.

Cluster Reduction (Vowel). The third type of systematic elision identified in Bangkalanese is cluster reduction, specifically in the domain of vowel clusters. Crowle (1992) defines cluster reduction as a phonological process in which a sequence of phonemes contracts into a single phoneme, often leaving traces of the original cluster in the resulting form. For instance, he illustrates the phenomenon with the English word

handgrip, which many speakers pronounce as [ha:ngrip] rather than [ha:ndgrip]. While Crowle (1992) restricts the application of the term to consonant cluster reduction, the present study broadens its scope to encompass vowel cluster reduction as well.

Evidence from Bangkalanese Madurese demonstrates that vowel clusters are frequently subject to reduction during natural speech. This reduction typically occurs when vowel sequences span across two adjacent syllables in polysyllabic lexical items (i.e., words of three or more syllables). Such elision effectively compresses the syllabic structure and contributes to the distinctive phonotactic profile of the dialect. The following examples illustrate instances of vowel cluster reduction observed in the data.

8.	*saèket* [saɛkət]	≈	*sèket* [sɛkət]	‘fifty’
9.	*saèbu* [saɛbu]	≈	*sèbu* [sɛbu]	‘one thousand’
10.	*bââri’* [bɤɤriʔ]	≈	*bâriʔ* [bɤriʔ]	‘yesterday’
11.	*paalah* [paalah]	≈	*palah* [palah]	‘nutmeg’

In data sets 8, 9, 10, and 11, four vowel clusters are attested: [a-ɛ] (data 8), [a-ɛ] (data 9), [ɤ-ɤ] (data 10), and [a-a] (data 11). In Bangkalanese, these clusters undergo reduction, yielding [ɛ] (data 8), [ɛ] (data 9), [ɤ] (data 10), and [a] (data 11). It is important to note that these sequences represent vowel clusters rather than diphthongs, as the vowels occupy separate syllables and are articulated distinctly. In each case, the first vowel of the sequence ([a], [a], [ɤ], and [a]) occurs in the coda of the first syllable, while the second vowel ([ɛ], [ɛ], [ɤ], and [a]) appears in the onset of the subsequent syllable. Following the reduction process, the initial vowel is deleted, and the remaining vowel ([ɛ], [ɛ], [ɤ], or [a]) is retained in the second syllable. This process can be formally expressed as: VV ≈ V / C__CVC# that is, a sequence of two vowels spanning adjacent syllables is reduced to a single vowel, with the surviving vowel occupying the nucleus of the following syllable. This phenomenon provides further evidence of the dialect’s phonotactic tendency toward syllabic compression.

Initial Syllable Reduction. The fourth type of systematic elision identified in Bangkalanese is syllable reduction, with particular reference here to initial syllable reduction. This term is introduced in the present study to extend the analyses of earlier scholars. While Gimson (1975) and Skandera & Burleigh (2011) noted the presence of syllable reduction as a general phonological process, their accounts did not specify the positional domain in which the reduction occurs. By contrast, the current analysis emphasizes that positional factors are important for understanding the dynamics of syllable loss in Bangkalanese. In this study, initial syllable reduction is defined as the omission of the first syllable of a word, a process that typically applies to trisyllabic lexical items. The deletion of the initial syllable significantly alters the prosodic shape of the word, yielding a disyllabic surface form. This process contributes to the overall tendency of the dialect toward phonological economy, producing shorter and more compressed word structures. In addition, initial syllable reduction can have implications for stress placement and syllable weight, as the prosodic profile of the

word is restructured following elision. The following examples illustrate instances of initial syllable reduction observed in the data

12.	*kamores* [kamores]	≈	*mores* [mores]	‘soursop
13.	*kopètèng* [kɔpɛtɛŋ]	≈	*pètèng* [pɛtɛŋ]	‘crab’
14.	*komèrè(h)* [kɔmɛrɛ(h)]	≈	*mèrè(h)* [mɛrɛ(h)]	‘candle nut’
15.	*saratos* [*saratɔs*]	≈	*satos* [*satɔs*]	‘a hundred’

In data sets 12, 13, 14, and 15, the syllables [ka], [kɔ], [kɔ], and [sa] are deleted and realized as [Ø] in Bangkalanese. In each case, the affected syllable occurs in the initial position of the word, thereby exemplifying initial syllable reduction. The deletion of these syllables results in a restructuring of the prosodic shape of the word, with the medial syllable becoming the new initial syllable. It is important to note that the reduction process eliminates the vowel nucleus of the first syllable, leaving the vowel of the following syllable to serve as the primary nucleus. This operation not only shortens the word but also contributes to the dialect’s characteristic tendency toward phonological compression. Formally, the process can be represented as: CV ≈ Ø / #__CVCVC# that is, an initial open syllable (CV) is deleted when it occurs at the left edge of trisyllabic lexical items, resulting in a reduced disyllabic structure. This pattern further illustrates the systematic nature of elision processes in Bangkalanese Madurese, reinforcing the dialect’s distinctive phonotactic profile.

After discussing systemic elision, we now turn to the phenomenon of sporadic elision in Bangkalanese Madurese. Unlike systemic elision, which follows consistent phonological rules and can be generalized across lexical items, sporadic elision occurs irregularly in specific words without forming a broad systemic pattern. The sporadic elision processes identified in the data are divided into three main types: (1) apocope, (2) final syllable deletion, and (3) double syllable deletion.

Apocope. The first type of sporadic elision identified in Bangkalanese Madurese is apocope. Crowle (1992) defines apocope as a linguistic phenomenon involving the omission of phonemes at the end of words. Campbell (2013) further refines this definition, explaining that apocope (from the Greek apokopé ‘a cutting off,’ apo- ‘away’ + kopé ‘cut, beat’) refers to the loss of a sound, most commonly a vowel, at word-final position. In other words, apocope occurs when the phonemes occupying the final position of a word are omitted and remain unpronounced. The following examples illustrate instances of apocope observed in the data.

16	*tandhâh* [tand^{h}əh]	≈	*tandâ* [tandɤ]	‘mark in face’

In Data 16 above, the glottal consonant [h] occurring in word-final position is realized as [Ø]. Since only a single instance of this phenomenon was identified in the data, it cannot be regarded as a systemic process in Bangkalanese. Consequently, no

formalized rule or phonological formula is proposed to represent this occurrence in order to avoid the risk of overgeneralization or inaccurate theoretical claims.

Final Syllable Reduction. The third type of sporadic elision identified in Bangkalanese Madurese is referred to in this study as final syllable reduction. This term is introduced to specify the positional domain of syllable omission, as previous scholars, including Gimson (1975) and Skandera & Burleigh (2011), acknowledged syllable reduction in general but did not explicitly indicate the location of the affected syllable. Final syllable reduction involves the deletion of the terminal syllable of a word, which can encompass both its consonantal and vocalic components.

17	*lagghuna*	≈	*lagghu?*	‘tomorrow ‘
	[lagghuna]		[ləgghuʔ]	

In Data 17 above, the final syllable [na] of the word *lagghuna* is deleted, resulting in its realization as [Ø]. A notable feature of this reduction is that, following the deletion of [na], a glottal stop [ʔ] emerges to close the preceding syllable, effectively marking the new word boundary. This occurrence was observed only once in the data set, which justifies its classification as a sporadic elision rather than a systemic process. The singularity of this instance highlights the irregular and lexically specific nature of final syllable reduction in Bangkalanese.

Double Syllable Reduction. In Bangkalanese, words consisting of three or more syllables can undergo the omission of more than one syllable in their spoken realization. This study introduces the term double syllable reduction to denote this phenomenon, as no suitable terminology could be identified in the existing literature. Specifically, double syllable reduction refers to the deletion of two consecutive syllables at the beginning of a word. As a result, the word is significantly shortened, and its phonological structure is compressed, producing forms that are distinctive to the Bangkalanese dialect.

18.	*mataarè*	≈	*arè*	‘sun’
	[mataarɛ]		[arɛ]	

In Data 11 above, the initial two syllables [ma] and [ta] of the word [mataarɛ] are deleted through the process of double syllable reduction. As a result, the original four-syllable word is reduced to a disyllabic form, retaining only the syllables [a] and [rɛ]. Given that this instance was the only occurrence identified in the data, it is classified under sporadic elision rather than systemic elision. This categorization reflects the irregular and lexically specific nature of the phenomenon, which, while significant, does not exhibit sufficient regularity to warrant generalization.

The Principles of Elision in Bangkalanese Madurese

The elision phenomena documented in the Bangkalan dialect constitute salient linguistic markers that distinctly characterize the variety. Due to the frequency and systematicity with which such processes occur, Bangkalanese is regarded as more “elisionist” than other regional varieties of the language. Beyond their role in shaping descriptive labels, these phenomena also give rise to derivative constructs that underscore the autonomy of Bangkalanese within the larger Madurese linguistic ecology. The study of elision in this dialect thus provides both structural insights into

its phonological system and sociolinguistic perspectives on how distinctiveness is constructed, maintained, and recognized by speakers.

The analysis of the available data indicates that elision is not distributed randomly across the lexicon but is patterned according to lexical categories. The evidence suggests that nouns represent the category most prone to elision, followed by adjectives. Conversely, verbs and adverbs exhibit a marked degree of phonological resistance, with no instances of elision identified in the verbal domain. This distribution is noticeable, as it demonstrates that elision is not a mere performance phenomenon but a structured and selective phonological process. Accordingly, the first principle of elision in Bangkalanese can be formulated as follows: "Nouns and adjectives constitute the lexical categories most vulnerable to elision in Bangkalanese Madurese, while verbs and adverbs are the most stable categories, demonstrating strong resistance to phonological reduction." This principle highlights the dialect's functional phonotactic hierarchy and raises important questions about the cognitive, communicative, and pragmatic factors that influence why certain lexical categories are more susceptible to reduction than others.

Of equal significance is the application of elision to proper names. A considerable number of personal and geographical names undergo phonological reduction in Bangkalanese usage, resulting in shortened and often more colloquial forms. This practice is not only illustrative of the dialect's phonological tendencies but also carries profound sociolinguistic implications. Proper names serve as markers of social identity, intimacy, and group membership, and their modification through elision reflects processes of linguistic innovation and social meaning-making. The use of shortened proper names via elision indicate familiarity, solidarity, and local identity, thereby reinforcing cultural cohesion within the Bangkalan community. The following examples of elision in proper names further illustrate how these principles are realized in practice, thereby consolidating the distinctiveness of Bangkalanese as a dialect shaped by both linguistic and social factors:

Tabel 4. Elision Phenomena in Proper Nouns

No	Proper Nouns	Elisioned Proper Nouns	Note	Phonological Process
1	*Zainal* [zʏijnal]	*Inal* [inal]	Personal name	Apheresis
2	*Zainul* [zʏijnol]	*Inul* [inol]	Personal name	Apheresis
3	*Kobânyar* [kɔbʏñar]	*Kbânyar* [kbʏñar]	Name of a district in Bangkalan Regency	Syncope
4	*Patemon* [patəmɔn]	*Ptemon* [ptəmɔn]	Name of a village in Bangkalan Regency	Syncope
5	*Sukolèla* [kɔlɛla]	*Kelèla* [klɛla]	Name of a village in Bangkalan Regency	Syncope
6	*Ahmad* [ahmat]	*Mat* [mat]	Personal name	Initial Syllable reduction

7	*Abdul* [addol]	*Dul* [dol]	Personal name	Initial Syllable reduction
8	*Tanjhungbhumè* [tandʒʰuŋbʰumɛ]	*Jhungbhumè* [dʒʰuŋbʰumɛ]	Name of a district in Bangkalan Regency	Initial Syllable reduction
9	*Tanamèra* [tanamɛra]	*Namèra* [namɛra]	Name of a district in Bangkalan Regency	Initial Syllable reduction
10	*Arosbhâjâ* [arɔsbhɤdʒɤ]	*Resbhâjâ* [rɛsbhɤdʒɤ]	Name of a district in Bangkalan Regency	Initial Syllable reduction
11	*Lorongkènè'* [lɔrɔŋkɛnɛʔ]	*Rongkènè'* [rɔŋkɛnɛʔ]	Name of a village in Bangkalan Regency	Initial Syllable reduction
12	*Tèmorlorong* [tɛmɔrlɔrɔŋ]	*Morlorong* [mɔrlɔrɔŋ]	Name of a village in Bangkalan Regency	Initial Syllable reduction

The second principle of elision in Bangkalanese Madurese can also be discerned by examining the data presented in Table 4 above, which reveals a clear tendency for speakers to maintain a "three-syllable maximum principle" in word formation. Numerous lexical items in standard Madurese consist of four syllables; however, when these items are realized in the Bangkalanese, they are frequently reduced to three or, in some cases, even two syllables. This consistent pattern of reduction suggests the formulation of a principle that can be stated as follows: "If a Madurese word contains four syllables, it will most likely be reduced to three or two syllables when spoken in the Bangkalanese." This principle contributes to the characteristic brevity of Bangkalanese and explains why it is often perceived as shorter and more concise in comparison to other regional varieties of the language.

The third principle emerges from the observation that the frequent occurrence of elision in Bangkalanese Madurese gives rise to the formation of consonant clusters. When vowels or syllables are dropped, formerly separated consonants come into direct contact, producing clusters that are not always present in the standard or other dialects. This process contributes to the widely held stereotype of Madurese as a language characterized by dense consonant cluster formations. Accordingly, the principle can be formulated as follows: "Elision is a primary factor contributing to the emergence of consonant clusters in Bangkalanese Madurese."

Taken collectively, these three principles demonstrate that elision in Bangkalanese is not a random or marginal process but rather a systematic phonological mechanism that both simplifies and restructures the linguistic output of speakers. On the one hand, elision operates as a process of phonological simplification, whereby complex or lengthy word forms are reduced to shorter, more economical realizations. This simplification is achieved through the deletion of vowels, syllables, or other phonological segments, resulting in forms that are not only easier to articulate but also quicker to process in everyday speech. Such tendencies align with broader cross-linguistic patterns, wherein phonological reduction often arises as a strategy to enhance fluency and communicative efficiency. On the other hand, elision functions as a generative force that reshapes the broader phonotactic patterns of the dialect. The systematic reduction of four-syllable words to three or two syllables contributes to the

emergence of the so-called “three-syllable maximum principle,” thereby imposing an implicit structural constraint on the rhythm and prosody of the dialect. Similarly, the deletion of vowels frequently results in the juxtaposition of consonants, producing clusters that are not typically observed in other Madurese varieties. In this way, elision contributes directly to the stereotype of Madurese as a language characterized by dense consonant clusters, though in Bangkalanese Madurese this characteristic can be traced specifically to recurrent elision processes.

CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in this study leads to several key conclusions. First, lexical items in Madurese exhibit a syllabic structure ranging from a minimum of one syllable to a maximum of four syllables, with disyllabic and quadrisyllabic forms being particularly prone to elision. Second, seven types of elision were identified in Bangkalanese Madurese: apheresis, deletion, vowel cluster reduction, initial syllable reduction, apocope, final syllable reduction, and double syllable reduction. Third, processes of deletion result in an increased prevalence of consonant clusters, while syllable reduction contributes to the shortening of word forms. Together, these processes give rise to the perception that Bangkalanese Madurese is typified by a dense cluster structure and a compressed lexical form, distinguishing it from other Madurese dialects.

Although this investigation is preliminary in scope, relying on a limited dataset, it offers contributions to the theoretical discussion of elision. It extends Nurhayati’s (2016) classification of syllabic word structures by introducing the category of four-syllable words. It further refines Crowle’s (1992) conceptualization of cluster reduction by broadening its application to include vowel cluster reduction alongside consonant cluster reduction. Additionally, it advances the accounts of syllable reduction proposed by Gimson (1975) and Skandera & Burleigh (2011) by specifying positional classifications, namely initial syllable reduction, final syllable reduction, and double syllable reduction.

To consolidate and advance this line of inquiry, future research should investigate elision phenomena at the phrasal and sentential levels. Such an expansion would allow for the testing and refinement of the hypotheses advanced in this study, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the phonological and structural characteristics of Madurese.

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