

AN EXAMINATION OF PHONOLOGICAL CHANGES AND VARIATIONS IN THE DAYAK BAKUMPAI BUNTOK LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to understand and illustrate the phonological changes and their implications in the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language. Using a qualitative approach, examples were precisely analyzed leading to explanations encompassing Diphthongization, Monophthongisation, Prothesis, Epenthesis, Apheresis, Apocope, Metathesis, and Phonotactics. The study illuminated the unique features of the language through various examples. For instance, the transformation from “Pahit,” meaning bitter in English, to “Bapait” underwent systematic linguistic modifications including the addition of a diphthong and removal of a consonant indicating a departure from convention in Bahasa Indonesia. In understanding these phonological changes, the study further underscores the intricate and multifaceted dimensions of the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language and provides significant insights into the understanding of broader linguistic trends in the region. The research reveals how a deeper understanding of these processes could offer a more profound appreciation for linguistic diversity and richness in the context of Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Phonological Change, Dayak Bakumpai Language, Linguistic Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The Bakumpai language is one of the regional languages spoken in South Barito Regency that continues to be actively used and transmitted across generations. As noted by Misrita (2016), Bakumpai is spoken by indigenous communities living in villages scattered along the Barito River basin, covering parts of South and Central Kalimantan. This continuity is further supported by the fact that native speakers still use the Bakumpai language in their daily lives, particularly within family settings and close-knit community interactions (Hasby et al., 2025). Despite geographical separation caused by forests, swamps, and hills, communication among speakers remains effective, indicating the resilience and continuity of the language.

Language use in communication is influenced not only by linguistic factors but also by geographical, social, and cultural contexts. In this regard, language serves as a

system of arbitrary sound symbols used by members of a social group to cooperate, communicate, and identify themselves (Kridalaksana, 2001, as cited in Yendra, 2018). Therefore, the use of language cannot be separated from the socio-cultural environment in which it is embedded.

In South Barito Regency, the Bakumpai language exhibits various social and regional variations. Speakers tend to be attentive to the choice of language variety, particularly in terms of speech levels, as language use is closely related to social context. In everyday life, Bakumpai functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for preserving cultural identity. In this study, the Bakumpai language in South Barito, particularly the Buntok dialect, is referred to as BDBDL.

Previous studies have explored aspects of related languages and the structure of the Bakumpai language. Santoso et al. (1991), in their study on the Dayak Ngaju language,

identified 26 phonemes categorized into consonants, semivowels, vowels, and diphthongs, along with various syllable patterns and morphological processes, including affixation and reduplication. Additionally, Retno Inten Maulani and Setia Budhi (2005) examined the structure and identity of the Bakumpai language, highlighting its morphological system, including free and bound morphemes, suffixation patterns, and pronoun systems. These studies provide important foundational insights into the linguistic structure of Dayak languages, including Bakumpai.

However, research focusing specifically on the phonological aspects and lexical features of the Bakumpai language, particularly the Buntok dialect, remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine the phonological structure of the Bakumpai language more deeply, especially in terms of phonological processes and lexical patterns. This research is expected to contribute not only to linguistic studies but also to the preservation and appreciation of the Dayak Bakumpai language in South Barito Regency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach complemented by descriptive analysis. This methodology was selected as it affords a comprehensive description of the Dayak Bakumpai language. The primary data source comprised dialect variations within the Dayak Bakumpai community in the South Barito regency.

The collected data underwent transcription and systematic analysis. The process began with the identification of lexico-phonological changes, followed by their categorization into distinct classes. In-depth examination of each instance marked the next steps, encompassing annotation of the original word, the transformed form, and discussion on possible causes for such alteration.

Subsequently, the influences of these phonological modifications on linguistic dynamics and communicative practices were

scrutinized, highlighting their contribution to regional linguistic diversity (Johnstone, 2000). These findings were summarized and archived for presentation in the section detailing the research outcomes.

RESULT

The Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language presents an intriguing complexity with the identification of eight unique parts of words, namely Diphthongization, Monophthongisation, Prothesis, Epenthesis, Apheresis, Apocope, Metathesis, and Phonotactics. Each of these parts, displaying distinct characteristics and functions, provides a more detailed insight into the language's structure and phonetics. The upcoming sections will delve into an in-depth discussion and exploration of each of these facets, enriching the understanding of the dynamics and intricacies that make up the linguistic fabric of the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language.

Diphthongization

Diphthongization is a phonological change wherein a monophthong, or a single vowel sound, is transformed into a diphthong, a complex vowel sound that starts near the articulatory position for one vowel and moves towards the position for another. This transformation results in the production of two vowel sounds sequentially in the same syllable.

One notable change occurs in the transition from the Indonesian word "Pahit" to the Dayak Bakumpai version "Bapait". "Pahit", meaning bitter in English, undergoes a couple of systematic and identifiable linguistic changes to become "Bapait" in Dayak Bakumpai.

The major transformation is the addition of a diphthong, "Ba", representing a departure from the original monophthong structure of "Pahit". Unlike in Indonesian, diphthongs are more common and freely occurring in the Dayak Bakumpai language, which allows greater phonological flexibility. This shift from "Pa" to "Ba" not only alters

pronunciation but also reflects systematic sound adaptation patterns.

Simultaneously, the removal of the “h” from “Pahit” marks a secondary modification leading to the development of “Bapait”. This instance of removing a consonant letter represents a phonological change under the Apheresis category, which is also prevalent in the Dayak Bakumpai language.

In summary, the transformation from “Pahit” to “Bapait” illustrates how diphthongization operates as a key phonological process in the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language, involving both the addition of vowel complexity and the modification of consonant structures. This change not only reflects a shift from monophthong to diphthong usage, but also demonstrates the interaction between multiple phonological processes, such as apheresis, within a single lexical transformation. Such patterns highlight the distinct phonetic characteristics of the language and reinforce the idea that phonological variation in Bakumpai is systematic rather than arbitrary, contributing to a deeper understanding of its linguistic structure and identity.

Monophthongisation

Monophthongisation plays a contrasting role to diphthongization, as it involves the simplification of two vowels or vowel clusters into a single vowel. This phonological change signifies a shift in pronunciation and articulation, transforming the original complex structure of certain words into a more uniform and straightforward sound.

A prime example is the adaptation of the Indonesian word “Mandi” into the Dayak Bakumpai version “Mandui”. The original Indonesian word “Mandi” translates to “to bathe” in English. While transitioning into Dayak Bakumpai language, an interesting phonological change develops.

Instead of the expected simplification, the Dayak Bakumpai word incorporates the addition of the diphthong “ui” at the end. It’s significant to mention that this particular event doesn’t strictly correspond to the

standard monophthongisation process. However, it demonstrates the diverse nature of phonological changes observable in the Dayak Bakumpai language.

As such, in Dayak Bakumpai language, the term “Mandui” is utilized to represent the act of bathing. This linguistic transformation elucidates that, despite the prevalent trend towards monophthongisation, different processes like diphthongization can also transpire, further accentuating the linguistic complexity and versatility found in regional languages like Dayak Bakumpai.

In conclusion, the discussion above indicates that phonological changes in the Dayak Bakumpai language do not always strictly follow a single theoretical pattern such as monophthongisation. Instead, the transformation from “Mandi” to “Mandui” reflects a more dynamic interaction between different phonological processes, including diphthongization. This highlights that sound change in Bakumpai is flexible and context-dependent, demonstrating the language’s rich phonological variation and its ability to adapt beyond conventional linguistic classifications.

Prothesis

Prothesis is a phenomenon that involves the addition of a sound at the beginning of a word. This particular process can markedly alter the meaning of a word, manifesting the beautiful complexity and variety in languages. The Dayak Bakumpai language embodies the concept of Prothesis with compelling clarity, as exhibited by the following examples:

In its native form, the Dayak Bakumpai word “Jeu” refers to “tomorrow”. When the phoneme “Han” is added to the word’s forefront, it morphs into “Hanjeu”, effectively changing its meaning to “morning”. This example demonstrates the power of Prothesis in transforming linguistic meaning simply through the addition of a sound or phoneme.

Similarly, the original term “Anak” signifies a “child” or the offspring of a couple. However, the introduction of the diphthong “ha” at the beginning through Prothesis gives birth to the transformed term

“Hanak”, which carries the distinct meaning: “parents and child”. This instance further emphasizes the impactful role of Prothesis in word meaning alteration and exhibits the intricacies of the Dayak Bakumpai language.

In conclusion, the examples above demonstrate that prothesis in the Dayak Bakumpai language functions as a significant phonological process that not only modifies word forms but also generates distinct semantic shifts. The addition of initial sounds such as “han” or “ha” illustrates how subtle phonemic changes can expand or alter meaning in meaningful ways. This highlights the systematic and functional role of prothesis in enriching the expressive capacity of the language, reflecting both its structural complexity and its dynamic nature in everyday communication.

Epenthesis

Epenthesis refers to the inclusion of a sound in the middle of a word. This phonological change can play a significant role in altering the pronunciation and occasionally the meaning of the word, thereby contributing to the complexity of a language. The Dayak Bakumpai language showcases the epenthetic process through the following instances.

The word “Asam” in Indonesian undergoes a phonemic transformation in the Dayak Bakumpai language to become “Ansem”. Both words carry the same meaning, but the Dayak Bakumpai variant includes an additional consonant “n”, and the vowel “a” gets replaced with “e”, showcasing the principle of Epenthesis.

Similarly, the Indonesian word “Asap” experiences a shift in Dayak Bakumpai to become “Ansep”. The original and modified versions share the same meaning. However, the Dayak Bakumpai term adds an “n” consonant and switches the vowel “a” with “e”, epitomizing Epenthesis.

Lastly, the Indonesian term “Masak” transforms into “Mansak” in the Dayak Bakumpai linguistic context. Although the two words share the same meaning, the

inclusion of “n” in the Dayak Bakumpai version provides a clear representation of Epenthesis.

In conclusion, the examples above illustrate that epenthesis in the Dayak Bakumpai language functions as a consistent phonological process that enhances pronunciation without necessarily altering meaning. The insertion of consonants such as “n,” along with accompanying vowel adjustments, demonstrates how sound patterns are systematically adapted within the language. This indicates that epenthesis not only contributes to phonetic variation but also reflects the structured and rule-governed nature of Bakumpai phonology, enriching its linguistic complexity and distinctiveness.

Aferesis

Apheresis is a linguistic phenomenon involving the removal of one or more phonemes at the start of a word, often leading to a change in pronunciation and sometimes even the meaning of the word. An example highlighting this process from the Dayak Bakumpai language is portrayed below:

The term “Hasundau” in the Dayak Bakumpai language, which translates to “bertemu” in Bahasa Indonesia, can undergo apheresis by omitting the phoneme “ha”. After this process, the term becomes “Sundau”, which also translates to “bertemu” in Indonesian. This illustrates how the application of apheresis can result in words that, while surface different phonetically, may carry identical semantic interpretations.

In conclusion, the example of “Hasundau” transforming into “Sundau” demonstrates that apheresis in the Dayak Bakumpai language functions as a systematic phonological process that does not necessarily alter semantic meaning. Instead, it reflects a tendency toward phonetic simplification through the omission of initial phonemes while maintaining lexical equivalence. This phenomenon indicates that phonological variation in Bakumpai operates within consistent linguistic patterns, where sound reduction coexists with semantic stability,

further emphasizing the regularity and adaptability of the language's phonological system.

Apocope

Apocope is a prevalent linguistic phenomenon where one or more phonemes—the perceptually distinct units of sound that differentiate words—are eliminated from a word's end. This seemingly subtle modification significantly impacts the overall semantics and pronunciation of the word in question.

Take, for instance, the word “Ayun” in Bahasa Indonesia, which translates to “punya” in English. Here, the removal of the final consonant ‘n’ due to the Apocope process transforms it into “Ayu”. Consequently, the term's interpretation shifts to “punya dia”, suggesting the pervasive impact of the Apocope process on semantic alterations.

Similarly, the term “Kuan” in the same language holds the meaning of the English word “kata”. Upon employing Apocope and eliminating the last consonant ‘n’, the term evolves into “Kua”. This change toggles its meaning to “kata dia”. Thus, these examples dynamically display how Apocope contributes to fluid changes within language, effortlessly adapting the meaning of words through phonetic modifications.

In conclusion, the examples demonstrate that apocope in the Dayak Bakumpai language functions as a significant phonological process that not only simplifies word forms through the removal of final phonemes but also leads to meaningful semantic shifts. These changes highlight how subtle sound reduction can influence interpretation and usage in context. This indicates that apocope plays an important role in shaping both the phonetic structure and semantic nuance of the language, reflecting its dynamic and adaptive linguistic system.

Metathesis

Metathesis, a linguistic mechanism, concerns the transposition of sounds or

syllables within a word. This process can lead to noticeable shifts in pronunciation and, in some cases, subtle changes in meaning. The following examples illustrate how this phonological process operates in actual language use.

In “Durian” which transforms to “Duhian”, the consonant sounds /r/ and /h/ are transposed, adjusting the word's pronunciation. The result is a reconfigured pronunciation, maintaining the original word's core phonetic identity.

Another example is “Urat” becoming “Uhat”. In this instance, the /r/ and /h/ are interchanged, yielding a recognizably different yet similar-sounding word. Metathesis is a mode by which languages naturally evolve and morph.

The reshuffling from “Malam” to “Malem” presents /a/ and /l/ transposition. This mild shift leads to an altered pronunciation while preserving the essence of the initial term.

In conclusion, the examples above demonstrate that metathesis in the Dayak Bakumpai language operates as a systematic phonological process that reorganizes sounds within words while largely preserving their original meanings. These transpositions, whether involving consonants or vowels, result in variations in pronunciation without disrupting lexical identity. This indicates that metathesis contributes to the natural evolution of the language, reflecting its flexibility and the patterned nature of sound changes within its phonological system.

Phonotactics

Phonotactics refers to the rules and constraints on how sequences of phonemic elements (segments) can be combined in a language. These rules contribute significantly to the rhythmic and phonemic patterns that characterize different languages.

In the Dayak Bakumpai language, it can be seen that the manipulation of the word “Jari” by adding the phoneme sequence “ji” to create the new word “Jariji”. These changes not only extend the word but also generate a

new syllable, thereby creating a modified pronunciation and meaning.

“Jari” alone translates to “finger” in Bahasa Indonesia. But with the addition of “ji” at the end, the word transitions into “Jariji”, which carries the meaning “jari jemari” (fingers).

In conclusion, the transformation of “Jari” into “Jariji” illustrates how phonotactic rules in the Dayak Bakumpai language allow for the expansion of phoneme sequences to create new syllabic structures and nuanced meanings. This process demonstrates that phonological modification is not merely additive in form, but also functional in shaping semantic distinctions. Such patterns reflect the systematic nature of phonotactic constraints in Bakumpai, where sound combinations are governed by internal linguistic rules that contribute to both structural variation and expressive richness within the language.

DISCUSSION

The Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language, prevalent in Southeast Asia, showcases intriguing phonological changes with various phonological phenomena such as Diphthongization, Monophthongisation, Prothesis, Epenthesis, Apheresis, Apocope, Metathesis, and Phonotactics. Each of these phonological alterations contributes to the distinct contour of the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language.

Diphthongization and Monophthongisation are two linguistic transformations reflecting the complex interplay of vowels in this language. The transition from Indonesian word “Pahit” to Dayak Bakumpai “Bapait” is a testament to the unique dialectal feature of diphthongization. A similar instance can be observed in other Austronesian languages like Tagalog, where /i/ and /u/ are more likely to be part of diphthongs than occurring as independent monophthongs (Adisasmito-Smith, 2004). This suggests common linguistic trends within the Southeast Asian region.

Moreover, linguistic phenomena like Prothesis and Apheresis, involving changes at word ends, are prevalent across various languages. For instance, research on the historical linguistics of the English language reveals similar phonemic changes (Lass, 1980). However, the richness of Dayak Bakumpai Buntok’s cultural context adds a unique dimension to such phonemic changes. The diversity in prefixed and suffixed terms through Prothesis and Apheresis found in the language reflects its deep socio-cultural roots, evoking a sense of community spirit.

Epenthesis and Metathesis exemplify the linguistic flexibility in Dayak Bakumpai Buntok. Such dynamic transformations are common in other languages as well. A comparative example can be seen in the Samoan language, which also shows significant metathesis (Spencer, 1985). However, the specific combinations of consonants and vowels unique to Dayak Bakumpai Buntok make its phonological transformations stand apart.

Apocope, demonstrated in “Ayun” to “Ayu” transition, is likewise observed in other language studies. According to the lexical evidence from various languages, word-final segments are more likely to get lost than the word-initial or word-medial segments (Blevins, 2004). Yet, the specific cultural context and semantic transformations in the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language becomes the defining factor.

Lastly, the case of Phonotactics, as visible in the “Jari” to “Jariji” transition, underscores the language’s rhythm and complexity. Comparable to processes in other languages like German and French (Wiese, 1996). Phonotactics presents a valuable interface between phonology and morphology in the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language.

In conclusion, it is clear that, while there are similarities with other regional and global languages, the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language holds unique attributes tied to its intricate linguistic and cultural context, making it a fascinating object of study and comparison for linguists.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the phonological changes evident in the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language, including Diphthongization, Monophthongisation, Prothesis, Epenthesis, Apheresis, Apocope, Metathesis, and Phonotactics, contribute to the language's unique character and complexity. These varying transformations provide deep insights into the intricate structure and diverse nature of the language. While there are noticeable analogies between the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok phonological switches and phenomena observed in other regional and global languages, the unique cultural and linguistic context of the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language sets it apart from others. This unique language carries its own distinct identity that is deeply rooted in its regional customs and traditions. The phonological alterations are not merely linguistic transformations that occur overtime, but are also significant reflections of socio-cultural influences, providing a deep understanding of the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok community. This careful study of the Dayak Bakumpai Buntok language not only enriches the knowledge of linguistic diversity and change in Southeast Asia but also provides valuable material for linguists interested in the comparative study of global phonological phenomena.

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