

## The Phonological Structure of Sundanese Language as a Representation of Regional Language Identity

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aims to describe the phonological system of the Sundanese language and analyze how the characteristics of the sound function as a pillar of identity for the speaking community. As the regional language with the second largest number of speakers in Indonesia, Sundanese has a phonetic uniqueness that clearly distinguishes it from other cognate languages. Furthermore, in an ethnolinguistic perspective, the vowel 'eu' is analyzed as a symbol of the collective identity of the Sundanese people. The results show that the use of the vowel 'eu' is not just an articulatory phenomenon, but a representation of a "sense of language" rooted in local values. In the midst of modernization and the influence of urban Indonesian, this vowel is an indicator of the vitality of the language as well as a boundary marker for its speakers. This study concludes that the preservation of the vowel 'eu' in daily speech practice is an active effort to maintain the integrity of Sundanese language identity in the era of globalization.*

**Keywords:** Phonology, Sundanese, 'Eu' vowel, Language identity, Ethnolinguistics.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language has an important role in shaping cultural identity and maintaining the sustainability of local values in society. In Indonesia, regional languages not only function as a means of communication, but also as a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural heritage. One of the regional languages that is still actively used today is Sundanese, which has distinctive linguistic characteristics, especially in its phonological aspects.

Phonology is a branch of linguistics that studies the sound system of languages and their function in distinguishing meaning. Sundanese has a sound system that is different from Indonesian, both in terms of the number of phonemes and pronunciation patterns. One of the prominent features is the existence of the vowel /eu/ which is not found in standard Indonesian. This uniqueness makes the Sundanese language interesting to study from a phonological perspective.

In this article, we will discuss the difference in phonemes in Sundanese and Indonesian. Through this search, we can explore the unique phonological structure and explore the deep meaning of the linguistic diversity that Indonesian people possess through these two languages.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. Approach using a library research design. The data were obtained from linguistic textbooks, phonological theories, and scientific journal articles related to Sundanese phonology and regional language identity.

Data analysis was conducted through descriptive and comparative methods by interpreting phonological concepts and relating them to sociolinguistic. This method allows theoretical analysis without direct field observation.

## RESULT

### 1. Phonology of Sundanese language

In simple terms, Sundanese phonology is a branch of linguistics that studies sound systems, how sounds are produced, and patterns of sound changes in Sundanese.

Sundanese phonology is very unique because it has vowel and consonant characteristics that distinguish it from Indonesian and Javanese, even though it is in the same Austronesian family.

The phonological structure of Sundanese language is generally divided into two major parts:

#### 1. Vocal System (Vocalism)

Sundanese has 7 vowel phonemes, in contrast to Indonesian which has 6 by default.

\* Murni vowel: /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/ (taling), /o/.

\* Typical vowel: /ə/ (pepet): As in the old word.

\* /ɛ/ (written eu): This is the most powerful identity trait. This sound is produced with the position of the tongue in the upper center but the lips are not round. Example: red (red).

#### 2. Consonant System (Consonantism)

There are 18 native consonant phonemes in Sundanese:

\* Stroke: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/.

\* Swipe: /s/, /h/.

- \* Nasals: /m/, /n/, /ng/, /ny/.
- \* Vibrate/Side: /r/, /l/.
- \* Afrikat: /c/, /j/.
- \* Semivokal: /w/, /y/.

In the original Sundanese phonology, the sounds /f/, /v/, and /z/ are not known. These sounds are usually absorbed into /p/ or /j/ (e.g., university becomes *university*).

### 3. Syllable Structure (Phonotactics)

Sundanese recognizes syllable patterns (V), (VK), (KV), and (KVK). The interesting thing is the existence of Cluster patterns (Consonant Clusters) such as /py/, /gy/, /tr/, /br/. Example: crackers.

## 2. Sundanese sound system

The sound system or phonology of the Sundanese language is one of the most striking aspects in characterizing the identity of the people of West Java. Scientifically, this sound system is divided into two main categories: vowels (vocalism) and consonants (consonantism).

Here is an in-depth explanation of the sound system and its authoritative references:

### 1. Vocal System (Vocalism)

Sundanese has a system of 7 vowels. The existence of these seven vowels is unique because it is more than standard Indonesian (6 vowels) or Javanese (6 main vowels).

- \* /a/: low vowel, front, not rounded. Example: father.
- \* /i/: high vowel, front, not rounded. Example: cheeks.
- \* /u/: high, back, rounded vowels. Example: tribe.
- \* /e/: medium, front, non-rounded vowels. Example: phone
- \* /o/: medium, back, rounded vowels. Example: a store.
- \* /ə/: medium, middle, unrounded vowels. Example: weakness.
- \* /ɛ/ (written EU): high, middle, unrounded vowels. This is a characteristic (shibboleth) of the Sundanese language. The tongue is pulled to the upper center but the lips are not rounded. Example: red (red).

### 2. Consonant System (Consonantism)

Sundanese has 18 native consonants. Traditionally, Sundanese speech devices do not recognize sliding consonants such as /f/, /v/, and /z/.

Types of consonants	Bilabial	Denta/Alveolar	Palatal
Inhibition	P,b	t,d	
Nasals	m	n	The
Africa			c,j
Frikatif		s	
Liquid		r,l	

Semivowel	w		and
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\* Phonetic Phenomenon: In everyday speech, Sundanese people tend to replace the absorption sound /f/ or /v/ with /p/. Examples: A photo is taken of a photo, a vitamin is a vitamin.

### 3. Syllable Structure and Intonation

\* Accent/Pressure: In Sundanese, the word pressure (stress) usually falls on the penultima (the second syllable from the back).

\* Intonation: Known as lentong. Sundanese lentong has a rhythm that tends to be undulating and soft, which is often considered a representation of the politeness identity of its people.

### 3. Differences with national languages

The difference between the sound system (phonology) of Sundanese and Indonesian (National Language) lies in the number of phoneme inventories and their distribution patterns. In general, Sundanese has a more complex vowel system but a more limited native consonant system.

Here are the points of difference with book references:

#### 1. Differences in Vocal System (Vocalism)

This is the most striking difference. Indonesian has 6 vowels by default, while Sundanese has 7 vowels.

\* Vowel /ɛ/ (eu): Indonesian does not recognize this sound. In Sundanese, eu is an independent phoneme. Example: red (red).

\* Vowel /ə/ (pepet): In Indonesian, this vowel should not be at the end of an open word. But in Sundanese, the vowel pepet can be at the end of the word. Examples: Squirrels, Squirrels.

\* Diphthongs: Indonesian has native diphthongs such as /ai/, /au/, and /oi/ (island, beach). In the original Sundanese, there is actually no diphthong; Vowel rows are usually separated by a glotal stop or pronounced as two separate syllables.

#### 2. Differences in Consonant Systems

\* Consonants F, V, Z, Sy, Kh: In the original Sundanese phonological system, these consonants do not exist. These sounds only appear in the absorption word. Sundanese people naturally tend to substitute (replace) sounds:

\* /f/ and /v/ become /p/ (Active /rightarrow Active).

\* /z/ becomes /j/ (Permissions / rightarrow Permissions).

\* /sy/ becomes /s/ (Condition/rightarrow Condition).

\* Consonant Clusters: Sundanese has a richer diversity of clusters in the middle of words than Indonesian, such as /pny/, /cl/, /tr/. Examples: squeaky, gepyak.

#### 3. Difference in Accentuation (Lentong)

\* Indonesian: Tends to have non-phonemic stress or often falls on the last syllable in an emotional context.

\* Sundanese: Has a very patterned intonation pattern (lentong) with the dominant emphasis on the penultimate syllable (one before the last). This gives a typical "rhythmic" effect to Sundanese when speaking Indonesian.

A Concise Comparison Table.

#### 4. Preservation of regional languages

Regional language preservation is a multidimensional effort that aims to prevent the extinction of languages and preserve the cultural richness contained in them. This process involves not only linguistic aspects, but also sociological, political, and technological aspects.

The following is an in-depth explanation of the pillars of regional language preservation along with the book references:

##### 1. Utilization of the Domestic and Community Realm

The most basic preservation occurs at the family level. If the regional language is no longer used as the mother tongue (first language) at home, then the language is in danger of extinction.

- \* Intergenerational Transmission: The process of language inheritance from parent to child.
- \* Language as Identity: Using the local language in traditional ceremonies, circle of friends, and local religious activities to maintain a "sense of belonging" to the language.

##### 2. Formalization through Education (Linguistic Revitalization)

In Indonesia, the preservation of regional languages is strengthened through formal education pathways.

- \* Local Content Curriculum: Teaching grammar, literature, and regional scripts in schools.
- \* Regional Literacy: Publication of children's storybooks, magazines (such as Mangle in Sundanese), and teaching materials that are interesting for generations Z and Alpha.

##### 3. Digitalization and New Media Strategy

Regional languages must be included in the digital ecosystem to remain relevant.

- \* Software Localization: There is a choice of regional language on the operating system or application.
- \* Creative Content: The use of regional languages by influencers, the creation of regional pop songs, and films that proudly use the local dialect.
- \* Digital Corpus: Documentation of vocabulary in digital dictionaries and regional language Wikipedias (such as the Sundanese Wikipedia).

##### 4. The Basis of Regulation and Public Policy

Government support is crucial through policies that favor regional languages.

- \* Legal Protection: It is regulated in the 1945 Constitution Article 32 paragraph 2 which states that the state respects and maintains regional languages as national cultural assets.
- \* Standardization: Determination of official spelling so that there is uniformity in writing and teaching.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that phonological structure is not just a linguistic technical system, but a vital instrument of identity. The regularity of the 'eu' sound and certain intonation patterns function as social markers that connect individuals with their cultural roots, while maintaining the sustainability of the Sundanese language as the nation's identity at the regional level.

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