

## Syllabification in Indonesian Language

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### Abstract

*Dictionary cannot be separated with syllabification because it is one of the crucial parts of the reference book. It has been widely known that each language has its own linguistic system which creates differences between one language to another; and one of those differences is the system of syllabification. Syllabification, in Indonesian language system owns different rules compared to other languages. The practice of syllabification for Indonesian words considers the structure of the vowels and the consonants, as well as the syllabic itself, and the other rules of syllabification.*

### Keywords

syllabification; word;  
Indonesian language



## I. Introduction

Lexicography, as a part of linguistic sub-disciplines, cannot be separated from language and linguistic features themselves. Given this reason, it is known that lexicography studies about language itself. The features include phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, as well as pragmatics.

Dictionary, as the product of lexicography, is found in various types of fields. It is widely accepted that each language has its own system, and given all this, credible and trusted dictionary reflects to the language system itself. Language system is constructed from various rules. Among of these rules include three sub-systems: phonological sub-system, grammatical sub-system, and lexicon sub-system. Phonological sub-system deals with how human beings produce sounds of language; the grammatical sub-system concerns with how the words and the sentences are formed and arranged, while the lexicon sub-system talks about vocabularies (Samsuri, 1982: 67; see Lyons 1995: 155).

Social interaction provides insights related to phonological and grammatical sub-systems. Both of the systems are applied and analyzed using scientific tools which are given in formal education. Lexicon sub-system is also found in social interaction even though it is limited due to its need of scientific tool, called dictionary for further enrichment and analysis of vocabulary. Dictionary itself is the product of lexicography which is the practice of compiling, editing, writing, and making of a dictionary.

In actual fact, there are many dictionaries that cannot be categorized as an ideal dictionary. This statement is based on the results of some research which proves that some of dictionaries have not met the requirements to be called as a credible and trusted dictionary. In other words, many of those do not follow the standard system of Indonesian language. Even KBBI, which many assumes as the ideal one, needs to be proven of its credibility and reliability. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to conduct a research to prove whether KBBI is an ideal dictionary or not.

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## II. Review of Literatures

Many experts have given their definitions of dictionaries as the final product of lexicographic practice. Among those are mentioned below:

- a. Dictionary is a reference book which contains a list of words or words combination that includes various aspects of information of their meaning and use in certain language; dictionary, in its tendency, is arranged alphabetically (Kridalaksana, 2010: 86).
- b. Dictionary is a book of alphabetically-arranged words from one language containing the meaning of the words, the pronunciation, the spelling, and so on (American Every Dictionary in Chaer 2007: 179).
- c. Dictionary is a book containing a list of alphabetically-arranged words from one language; the words are given information about their definitions as well as their equivalents in other languages (Pierre Labrousse in Chaer 2007: 180).
- d. In simple terms, Keraf (2007: 44) suggests that dictionary is a book of reference containing an alphabetically-arranged list of words from one language that includes information on how to use those words.
- e. Dictionary is [1] a reference book containing alphabetically arranged words and expressions, as well as their meanings, uses, or their translations to other language; [2] a book of alphabetically arranged terms and names collection as well as their meaning and uses. (Tim Penyusun Kamus Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, Jakarta: Balai Pustaka 2001).

According to those definitions, it is concluded that:

1. Dictionary is a reference book containing a list of words and word combination from one language.
2. The words are alphabetically arranged.
3. There are given information about the meaning and the uses.
4. As well as given information about the pronunciation, spelling, and various other things.
5. The words are translated to other languages, hence there are monolingual dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries.
6. In addition, there is also a specialized dictionary containing registers from specific fields of studies.

However, those definitions still do not provide enough requirements for the concept of an ideal dictionary. To be the ideal one, a dictionary also needs to include syllabification, the information of words origin, the information of which fields the words are appropriate to used, the standard forms, the information of whether the words are archaic or classics, the areas of words use, and other various information. If those features are found in a dictionary, then it fulfills the requirements of an ideal dictionary.

A dictionary is used to comprehend words, meanings and examples of its usage. In this study, the dictionary of technical terms is regarded as a special or distinctive reference book which is tied or bound to the contexts within a particular area of study concerning with the word meanings and the examples of its usage (Amilia et al, 2018).

The body is the most important parts of the dictionary. It includes a list of alphabetically arranged words and their additional features as mentioned before, Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia, for example, uses the Latin alphabet, namely: *a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z*. Given to this rule, for some of double phonemes are categorized to the initial letters of the words, for examples: *ny, ng* are categorized in N-letter group; *kh* belongs to K-letter group. From the body of a dictionary, we are given the numbers of information including standard spelling, syllables, accents, capitalization

system, pronunciation, word class, etymology, definitions, synonyms, and derivative forms (Keraf, 2007: 46).

The practice of lexicography has proven that there is no an ideal dictionary providing a complete meaning of a word. It happens because language changes over time, along with socio-cultural changes in society. As the result, there are lots of new words created, and there are words becoming archaic even disappear, which then affects the whole parts of dictionary; the dictionary becomes incomplete because of those words. The changes of meaning also happen through the years, which mean that the dictionary becomes semantically less credible. Due to these phenomena, revision is conducted every three or five years. Theoretically, once a dictionary is published then revision practice is started. (Chaer, 2007: 206-210).

From all of this, it can be assumed that an ideal dictionary contains, at least some features mentioned below:

- a) Complete features of the word system
  - b) Complete, Precise, and Clear Gloss
  - c) Pronunciation and Spelling Information
  - d) World Class Information
  - e) Variety and Variation of Words
  - f) Etymology
  - g) The fields of words usage
  - h) The area of words usage
  - i) Social class of the words
  - j) Standardized Words Information
- (Chaer, 2007: 206-210).

### III. Discussion

Syllabification is the separation of a word into syllables. The first step of syllabification is to understand the difference between vowels and consonants. Phonology has divided the alphabets into vowels: *a, i, u, e o*, and into consonants: all letters other than vowels, for examples: *k, j, l, m, n, j*, and the other letters.

The next step is to understand what syllable is. Syllable is a single unit of speech containing one vowel sound. The easiest way to determine a syllable is to pay attention to the pronunciation of words' basic separation, both in Indonesian language and the loan words. The pronunciation itself is performed following orthographic principles. (Parmin dkk: 2011)

Words are often limited so that they cannot be written in full forms, which in results they need to be separated according to the syllables. The following is some ways to separate those kinds of words:

1. There are four ways of separating the basic words (roots).
  - a. If there are sequential vowels in the middle of the words then the separation is performed in between those vowels (-V/V-). For examples: *ma-af, sa-at, du-et, bu-ih, ba-ik*, and *ta-at*. If those words contain vowel diphthong, the separation is not performed between the vowels. For examples:  
*sau-da-ra not sa-u-da-ra*  
*pan-tai not Pan-ta-i*  
*pu-lau not pu-la-u*  
*au-la not a-u-la*

- b. If there are consonant and double consonants between two vowels, the separation is performed before the consonant (KV-KV), for examples: *pe-rut*, *ta-bu*, *ja-mur*, *pa-yung*, *ta-nya* dan *su-nyi*.
  - c. If there are sequential consonants in the middle of the words, the separation is performed in between those consonants (-K/KV-), for examples: *mak-lum*, *ger-tak*, *kom-pos*, *mik-ro*, *mig-ra-si* and *cap-lok*. However there are double consonants, such as *ng*, *kh*, *sy*, and *ny* that cannot be separated, for examples: *de-ngan*, *makh-luk*, *ikh-las*, *i-sya-rat*, and *bu-nyi*.
  - d. If there are more than two sequential consonants, the separation is performed after the first consonant (-K/KK-). For examples: *in-struk-si*, *in-sta-la-si*, *ab-strak-si*, and *in-stru-men*.
2. All affixes are considered as one syllable; it includes prefixes that has undergone changes. The separation is performed in the root of the words. The first step is to separate affixes from the stem. Then the second step is to separate the syllables from the root of words, for examples:

Step 1: *me-ramu*, *me-nyapu*, *men-coba*, *pem-belah-an*, *ke-panas-an*

Step 2: *me-ra-mu*, *me-nya-pu*, *men-co-ba*, *pem-be-lah-an*, *ke-pa-nas-an*

Notes:

- a. The suffix *-i* and words with an initial vowel letter are not separated. For examples: *mengakhir-i* dan *i-kan* (both are the examples of wrong syllabification)
- b. Separation of words with infix is performed as the following: *te-lun-juk*, *ge-ri-gi*, *ge-li-gi*, *ge-me-tar*, *ge-le-tar*
- c. Prefixes, infixes, and suffixes from the loan words are not considered as affixes but the root itself, hence the separation is performed by following the base words. For examples:

*spor-ti-vi-tas* not *sportiv-itas*

*ak-li-ma-ti-sa-si* not *ak-li-mat-isasi*

3. If a word has more than one root which can be combined with another root, the separation is performed as the followings:

a) Separated between the roots;

b) Separated as the rules of syllabification for the basic words (roots)

Consider the following examples:

<i>bio-logi</i>	or	<i>bi-o-lo-gi</i>
<i>mikro-biologi</i>	or	<i>mik-ro-bi-o-lo-gi</i>
<i>pasca-sarjana</i>	or	<i>pas-ca-sar-ja-na</i>
<i>pasca-panen</i>	or	<i>pas-ca-pa-nen</i>
<i>budi-daya</i>	or	<i>bu-di-da-ya</i>

SOURCE: <https://rezkirasyak.blogspot.com/2013/02/pemenggalan-kata-teknik-memenggal-kata.html>

Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia (PUEBI) states that there are some rules that need to be followed when practicing syllabification. Those rules are:

1. If a word consists of two roots or more, and those roots are combined then the separation is performed in between those roots.

For examples:

- *biografi*, *bio-grafi*, *bi-o-gra-fi*
- *biodata*, *bio-data*, *bi-o-da-ta*
- *fotografi*, *foto-grafi*, *fo-to-gra-fi*
- *fotokopi*, *foto-kopi*, *fo-to-ko-pi*
- *introspeksi*, *intro-speksi*, *in-tro-spek-si*

- introjeksi, intro-jeksi, in-tro-jek-si
  - kilogram, kilo-gram, ki-lo-gram
  - kilometer, kilo-meter, ki-lo-me-ter
  - pascapanen, pasca-panen, pas-ca-pa-nen
  - pascasarjana, pasca-sarjana, pas-ca-sar-ja-na
2. Names of person consisting of two or more roots at the end of the line are separated in between those roots.  
For examples:
- The song "Indonesia Raya" was composed by Wage Rudolf Supratman.
  - *Layar Terkembang* was written by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana.
3. Abbreviations for names and titles consisting of two or more letters are not separated.  
For examples:  
He works at DLLAJR.  
The last poet of Keraton Surakarta has the title R.Ng. Rangga Warsita.  
Notes: The following writing need to be avoided:
- He works at DLL-AJR.
  - The last poet of Keraton Surakarta has the title R. Ng. Rangga Warsita.
- Source: <https://puebi.readthedocs.io/en/latest/kata/pemenggalan-kata/>  
In the fourth edition of KBBI, syllabification uses several rules as followings:
- a. Vowels at the beginning or at the end of the root, for examples: *amil*, *elaborasi*, *uban*, *via*, and *vibrio* are not separated, and need to be written as:  
amil not a.mil  
ela.bo.ra.si not e.la.bo.ra.si  
uban not u.ban  
via not vi.a  
vib.rio not vib.ri.o
- b. Suffix –i, such as *mencabuti*, *mendarati*, *mengobati*, *memukuli*, and *memusuhi* are not separated, and need to be written as:  
men.ca.but.i  
men.da.rat.i  
meng.o.bat.i  
me.mu.kul.i
- c. Words consisting of one vowel in the middle of the word, for examples: *otobiografi*, *piezoelektrik*, *plagiator*, *puisi*, and *xiloidina* need to be separated as below:  
oto.bi.o.gra.fi  
pi.e.zo.e.lek.trik  
pla.gi.a.tor  
pu.i.si  
xi.lo.i.di.na
- d. Suffixes, derived from loan words, especially suffix –isme whose elements is the root of words, and treated as suffix, are separated as following:  
However, if –isme is not considered as suffix, and not treated as the root of words, then the separation is as the following:  
anar.kis.me  
se.ku.lar.is.me  
ver.bal.is.me
- e. Arabic consists of *ain* or *hamzah*, and preceded by consonants, such as *alquran*, *bidah*, *Jumat*, and *mutah*, are separated as the original pronunciation.  
For examples:

Al.qur.an  
bid.ah  
Jum.at  
mut.ah

Syllabification is closely related to syllable. Syllables are parts of a word that form a unity of arc of loudness, except for the words only consisting of one syllable, such as *mas*, *las*, *khas*, *bab*, and many more called as monosyllabic. It is known that syllable does not have any meaning. Even though there is no meaning, learning syllable is still important because it is the crucial part of syllabification practice, especially in the cases of the end of the words. In the practice of writing, syllabification needs to be performed carefully and thoroughly.

This important practice of syllabification can be seen from a Standard English dictionary. It separates the syllables thoroughly, hence that if one hesitates to separate some words, she or he can obtain information through the book. The word '*change*', for example, only has one syllable (monosyllabic); thus the dictionary does not give the syllabification information. The dictionary only gives syllabification for the words consisting of two or more syllables, for examples: *gen'tle.man*, *change'a.bil.i.ly*, *change'a.ble* and many more.

However, in the case of Indonesian dictionary, the book does not give information about syllabification. Syllabification in Indonesian language is performed by following the concrete rules found in the Introduction part of the dictionary.

In the practice of writing, we often need to separate a word because of the limited space of paper or the other reasons, and the way to perform this kind of syllabification is given in elementary school. However, in fact, there are many scholars who do not understand the rules. Below are some of the examples:

- lab-rak or la-brak
- ge-og-ra-fi or ge-o-gra-fi
- swas-ta or swa-sta
- ki-lo-gram or ki-log-ram

To know the correct way to separate a word, the easiest way is to look the word up in ideal dictionary, such as *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*. KBBI is considered as the ideal reference because it gives credible information (Chaer: 2007: 188).

#### IV. Conclusion

1. There are 4 ways to separate the basic words (roots):
  - a. If there are sequential vowels in the middle of the word, the separation is performed in between those vowels (-V/V).
  - b. If there are consonant and double consonants found between two vowels, the separation is performed before the second consonant (KV-KV).
  - c. If there are sequential consonants in the middle of the words, the separation is performed in between those consonants (-K/KV-).
  - d. If there are more than two sequential consonants, the separation is performed after the first consonant.
2. All the affixes are considered as one syllable, including derivation prefixes which can be separated from the root of the words.
3. If a word consists of two or more roots, and are combine one to another, then:

Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia (PUEBI) suggests that there are some rules to follow while practicing syllabification. Among of the rules are:

- a. If one word consists of two or more roots, and combined, the separation is performed in between those roots. The combination is separated in its base of word.
- b. The names of person, which consisting of two or more roots at the end of the words, are separated in between those roots.
- c. The abbreviations for names and titles which consisting of two or more sequential letters are not separated.

According to fourth version of KBBI, there are some rules of syllabification:

1. A syllable consisting of only one vowel, either at the beginning or at the end of the roots, such as *amil*, *elaborasi*, *uban*, *via*, and *vibrio*, is not separated.
2. Suffix *-i*, such as in the words *mencabuti*, *mendarati*, *mengobati*, *memukuli*, and *memusuhi*, is not separated.
3. Words consisting of a vowel in the middle of the base, such as *otobiografi*, *piezoelektrik*, *plagiator*, *puisi*, and *xiloidina*, can be separated independently.
4. Additional syllable at the end of the base, from loan words, such as *-isme* from independent word is treated as suffix. However, it is not considered as suffix if the base is not independent word.
5. Arabic consisting of *ain* or *hamzah*, preceded by consonants, such as *alquran*, *bidah*, *Jumat*, and *mutah* are separated by following the original pronunciation.

Syllabification is one of important things in the practice of writing. Given to this reason, it is suggested that every teacher pays more attention to the practice of syllabification. Thus, it can be expected in the end of the study that the students will master the syllabification practices.

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