

## Challenges in Enggano Orthography Development

This paper reports on challenges encountered in developing an orthography for Enggano, an endangered language of Indonesia. Enggano as spoken in 1930s was documented by Hans Kähler in a grammar, text collection and dictionary (Kähler 1940, 1975, 1987). However, Kähler used different conventions in each publication. Moreover, the language has undergone significant sound changes (see Yoder 2011). Hence, developing a standard orthography is an important goal. Following Seifart (2006), the orthography should not only reflect phonemic distinctions but also be practical and easy to use for speakers who are familiar with Indonesian. The challenge is to incorporate our developing understanding of Enggano morphophonology, whilst also collaborating on proposals with key stakeholders, including the community and other researchers working with Enggano data.

The first challenge is representing the oral vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/, /ə/ and /ɨ/. Kähler does not distinguish between schwa (used in the dictionary) and /ɨ/ (used in the grammar). It is possible that these were simply variants at the time. However, in contemporary Enggano there are several minimal pairs, including [hiəɾ] ‘worm’ vs [hiɪɾ] ‘woman’. It is important for both learners and linguists to represent meaningful differences orthographically. In Standard Indonesian orthography, both /e/ and schwa are written with the letter ‘e’. The community have begun using the diacritic é to represent schwa. We propose extending the diacritic to represent /ɨ/ as ù. Although diacritics are cumbersome, this avoids the pitfalls of alternatives: using the same letter for different sounds creates confusion; using digraphs (e.g. eu for u) creates complications as diphthongs are frequent in Enggano (see Yoder 2010).

The second challenge is representing the nasal vowels. In words containing nasal consonants, all vowels are nasalised (Yoder 2010). However, there are minimal pairs that suggest nasal vowels are phonemes (e.g. [kep] ‘not yet’ vs [kêp̃] ‘island’). We propose indicating nasal vowels with a tilde, but in contrast to Kähler, only where they are part of the root. Hence, we write *hãpê* ‘breathe’ but *hame* ‘they’. This has the advantage of being simpler. A complication is that nasal vowels in the root trigger changes to affixes. For example, the *b(u)*- prefix surfaces as *m(u)*-with roots containing nasals (e.g. *ka-m-ũẽ* ‘3-BU-cry’). In this case, we write the nasals to preserve morphological transparency.

The final challenge is representing glides. Following Yoder (2010), we take glides to be allophones of vowels in syllable-initial position. Consequently, we propose using ‘i’ for both the high, front vowel and the palatal glide. A complication is that Enggano also has a process of palatalisation that is triggered by high, front vowels before glottal consonants. This happened historically before the obligatory *e-* nominal prefix, which has since become optional. However, the glide is reanalysed as part of the root. This has produced some accidental homonyms, e.g. *iar* ‘don’t’ vs *iar* ‘child’ (from *e-ada*). Writing ‘i’ differs from the Indonesian practice of using ‘y’ for the glide. However, it was felt to be more consistent than introducing ‘y’ in some contexts and ‘i’ in others.

The paper provides more context on these issues, including alternative proposals and how these were developed and discussed with the community, via focus group interviews and comprehension exercises. It touches upon additional complications, such as sociolinguistic variation and pedagogical issues in using the orthography. It is hoped that this case study of Enggano orthography will have important implications for other projects developing an orthography collaboratively with the community – an important cornerstone of language documentation.

## References

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