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The Phenomenon of Linguistic Deletion in Ibn Qutaybah's Adab al-Kātib: Concept, Types, Levels, and Examples

Pr. Zaidour Salah, University of Hassiba Ben Bouali, Chlef, Algeria
s.zaidour@univ-chlef.dz, <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0002-6693-985X>
Dr. Leyla Hamrani, University of Hassiba Ben Bouali, Chlef, Algeria
Leyla.hamrani@univ-alger2.dz
Pr. Khadidja Benchehda, University of Hassiba Ben Bouali, Algeria
j.benchehda@gmail.com
Dr. Hadj Henni Yamina, University of Hassiba Ben Bouali, Algeria
hadjhenniyamina@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines linguistic deletion in Ibn Qutaybah's *Adab al-Kātib*. Deletion is treated as an established feature of Arabic and as a topic with a clear place in the classical linguistic tradition. The study defines deletion in its lexical and technical senses. It also identifies the main terms associated with it, describes its types and levels, and analyzes selected examples from the book. Particular attention is given to the close relationship between deletion and reconstruction (*taqdīr*). A deleted element is omitted from the linguistic structure, but a contextual or structural clue remains. This clue allows the omitted element to be recovered and preserves both meaning and grammatical coherence.

The study considers deletion at the phonological, morphological, prosodic, and syntactic levels. It also examines deletion within the word and the sentence. Examples from *Adab al-Kātib* include the deletion of *nūn* in *lam yakun* to give *lam yak*, the deletion of *alif* in *lam ubāl* to give *lam ubal*, and the loss of weak letters in *qul*, *bi'*, and *khaf*. The study also discusses the omission of sentence elements for brevity. It further examines the relation between deletion and *iḍmār*. In grammatical writing, *iḍmār* may be used in the sense of deletion. In other contexts, it may refer to concealment or an implicit element.

The study concludes that deletion occurs in several forms and at several linguistic levels. Its use is governed by Arabic usage, attested speech, and transmission from Arab speakers. Frequent use, ease of articulation, and the avoidance of phonetic heaviness explain some of its forms. Deletion does not impair meaning when a clear clue identifies the omitted element. It therefore serves as an effective means of brevity and economy while preserving semantic clarity and structural well-formedness.

Keywords: Linguistic deletion; Ibn Qutaybah; *Adab al-Kātib*; types of deletion; reconstruction (*taqdīr*); levels of deletion; syntactic deletion; morphological deletion; phonological deletion; ease of articulation.

Introduction

Deletion is one of the linguistic phenomena that attracted the attention of both classical and modern scholars of Arabic. In linguistic analysis, deletion is closely linked to reconstruction (*taqdīr*). Discussion of a deleted element is usually followed by an attempt to reconstruct it so that the structure of the utterance can be fully understood. This is because deletion is incidental to speech, whereas the basic form is speech without deletion.

First: The Concept and Terminology of Linguistic Deletion

1. The Concept of Deletion

a. Lexical Definition

In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, deletion is defined as cutting something from its edge.¹ Al-Jawharī states in *al-Ṣiḥāḥ* that to delete something is to drop it.²

The lexical meaning of the Arabic term *ḥadhf* therefore has two main senses:

First, cutting.

Second, dropping or omission.

A reading of *Adab al-Kātib* shows that Ibn Qutaybah explicitly uses this sense when he says: 'They drop ... and they delete.'³

Accordingly, deletion in its lexical sense refers to dropping an element from speech when a clue makes the omitted material recoverable.

Sībawayh (d. 180 AH) refers to this process at several points in *al-Kitāb*. He writes: 'Know that they sometimes delete words even when their original form is otherwise; they delete and alter them.'⁴

b. Technical Definition

In technical usage, deletion may involve omitting a governing element while retaining the governed element, or omitting the governed element while retaining the governor. This technical sense still reflects the lexical idea of removing or dropping something. The lexical and technical meanings can be summarized as follows:

- Lexically, deletion may denote plucking, dropping, cutting, or casting away.⁵

- Technically, the term derives from the lexical sense and refers to the omission of one of the root letters.

2. Synonyms in Arabic Lexicography

a. *Suqūt* (loss or falling), as in: 'The alif was lost because two consonants came together.'⁶

b. *Isqāt* (dropping), as in the example of 'الخزلي', whose dual is formed by dropping the *yā*'.⁷

c. *Rafḍ* (discarding), as in: 'Its original form is *فَلَسُو*, but the *wāw* was discarded.'

The reason is that Arabic nouns do not normally end in a weak letter preceded by *ḍamma* in this pattern.

d. *Ilqā* (casting off), as in the example of 'مخيط' when two consonants meet and one of them is cast off.

The example is 'مخيط'. Its expected form was 'مخيوط'. The *yā* was weakened, and two quiescent sounds then came together: the *yā* and the

wāw. The form 'مخيط' was therefore used, and one of the two consonants was cast off.⁸

e. *Ṭarḥ* (removal), as in *yarā*, *yar'ā*, *tar'ā*, and *nar'ā*. In such forms, the hamza may be removed.⁹

The example is *yar'ā*. When the hamza is removed, the form becomes *yarā*.

f. *Dhahāb* (loss), as in *ḥayū*, comparable to *khashaw*. The *yā* is said to have been lost because two consonants came together.

g. *Nuqṣ* (reduction), as in *al-ḍa'a*. Its original form was *ḍa'wa*, from which the *wāw* was lost. Its plural, *ḍa'awāt*, shows the original segment.¹⁰

The example is *al-ḍa'a*, whose original form is *ḍa'wa*.

3. Governing Principles

- Deletion usually occurs at the beginning or the end of a word.

- It is especially frequent in nouns such as *yad* (hand), *dam* (blood), *akh* (brother), and similar forms.

- A vowel may indicate the omitted radical, whether it is the *fā*', *ayn*, or *lām* of the root.

1. Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Alī, Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn al-Anṣārī al-Ifriqī, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, entry 'ḥ-dh-f', vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 3rd ed., 1414 AH), p. 810.

2. Al-Jawharī, Ismā'īl ibn Ḥammād, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ: Tāj al-Lughā wa-Ṣiḥāḥ al-ʿArabiyya*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ghafūr 'Aṭṭār (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malāyīn, 4th ed., 1987), entry 'ḥ-dh-f', vol. 4, p. 1341.

3. Ibn Qutaybah, 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim, *Adab al-Kātib*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 1st ed., 1424 AH/2003), p. 213.

4. Sībawayh, 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān, *al-Kitāb*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1st ed., 1988), vol. 1, chapters on incidental phenomena in pronunciation and on what is deleted from words, p. 24.

5. Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥammūda, *Zāhirat al-Ḥadhf fī al-Dars al-Lughawī* (Alexandria: al-Dār al-Jāmi'iyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', uploaded edition, 1988), p. 7.

6. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, entry 's-q-t', vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 3rd ed., 1414 AH), passage on the loss of alif when two consonants meet; pagination varies by arrangement of the edition, p. 182.

7. Ibn Qutaybah, *Adab al-Kātib*, passage on deletion of letters and orthographic lightening, pp. 213-214.

8. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, entry 'kh-y-t', vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 3rd ed., 1414 AH), p. 259.

9. Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥammūda, *Zāhirat al-Ḥadhf fī al-Dars al-Lughawī* (Alexandria: al-Dār al-Jāmi'iyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', uploaded edition, 1988), theoretical discussion of levels of deletion; the page should be checked against the scanned copy, p. 34.

10. Ibn Jinnī, Abū al-Faḥ 'Uthmān, *al-Khaṣā'is*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār, vol. 2 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 4th ed., 1999), passage stating that deletion may affect the sentence, the single word, the consonant, and the vowel, p. 362.

- The omitted segment may return to its original form when the word is annexed or otherwise combined with another element.
- Deletion may affect an added segment as well as a root segment. Its main function is ease of pronunciation and the avoidance of phonetic heaviness.

Second: Types of Deletion

1. Deletion of Letters: Not every Arabic consonant or letter is subject to deletion. The letters discussed in this connection are mainly hamza, ḥā', nūn, hā', wāw, and yā'. Each occurs in particular environments.

a. Deletion of hamza: Arabic distinguishes hamzat al-qaṭ' and hamzat al-waṣl. Both may be omitted in specific contexts. An example is the change from sawā'iyya to sawāya through deletion of hamza. Hamzat al-waṣl is also lost in connected forms, as in forms derived from ibn. A long alif, or an alif resulting from another segment, may also be deleted when it meets a following consonant. An example is Zakariyyā, with the plural Zakariyyūn. This deletion is explained by the meeting of two consonants.

b. Deletion of ḥā': Deletion of this consonant is rare. The source gives the word ḥirḥ, meaning the private part, and states that the lighter form is ḥirah. Its original form is ḥirḥ. The consonant is deleted in a manner comparable to the deletion found in shafah. The plural is aḥrāḥ.¹¹ The explanation given is that Arabic speakers found a ḥā' preceded by a quiescent consonant heavy to pronounce. They therefore deleted it and geminated the rā'.

c. Deletion of nūn: Some cases are rare. One example is mudh, analyzed as deriving from min idh. Another is lam yak, in which the nūn of lam yakun is deleted for the same general reason.¹²

d. Deletion of hā': Only a few examples are reported. One is fū, whose original form is fūh.¹³

e. Deletion of wāw: Wāw may be deleted in nouns, weak verbs, and verbal nouns. It may occupy the first, middle, or final radical position.

Among the nouns in which an initial wāw is deleted, the source cites al-qahā, originally waqahā, and 'idda.¹⁴

Deletion of initial wāw is regular in the verbal nouns of roots beginning with wāw.¹⁵ Similar examples include ṣifa, sima, 'iza, and sana. Deletion of final wāw in nouns is more frequent than deletion in the first or middle radical position. Such deletion is motivated by ease rather than by a general analogical rule. The source cites ism in relation to samā' and sumūw,¹⁶ and lughā in relation to lughwa.¹⁷

f. Deletion of yā': Yā' may occur as the first, middle, or final radical. In nouns, the source cites yad (hand), whose reconstructed form is yady. The yā' is deleted for ease, and the vowel associated with the final radical is reflected on the dāl. Sībawayh gives the relational adjective as yadawiyy. The plural is aydin. Al-Jawharī also states that yad goes back to yady, on the pattern fa'l with a quiescent middle radical, as shown by forms such as aydin and yudiyy.¹⁸ Final yā' is also deleted from an indefinite defective noun in the nominative and genitive cases.

2. Sentence Deletion

A meaningful utterance is normally built from two basic elements: the musnad and the musnad ilayh. These may be understood as the predicative element and the element to which predication is assigned. A sentence is therefore based on a relation between two core elements. Other constituents complete the meaning. In a verbal sentence with a transitive verb, for example, the object may be required for full interpretation. In a nominal sentence, an initial noun requires a predicate, as in Zaydun munṭaliqun ('Zayd is leaving').

Predication therefore links the subject and predicate of a nominal sentence, or the verb and its subject in a verbal sentence. The verb, as musnad, is taken to express two things:

(a) an event, and (b) time.

If a verb expresses only time, as in the case of kāna, the noun alone is not sufficient. In a sentence with kāna, predication is established between its noun and its predicate.

Sībawayh (d. 180 AH) states: 'Do you not see that kāna functions in relation to ḍaraba? If you said kāna 'Abd Allāh, it would not constitute complete speech. But if you said ḍariba 'Abd Allāh, it would constitute complete speech.'¹⁹

11. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, passage concerning deletion of nūn from lam yakun and alif from lam ubāl, p. 214.

12. Ibn al-Shajarī, Hibat Allāh ibn 'Alī, Amālī Ibn al-Shajarī, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanāhī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1st ed., 1992), discussion of deletion of weak letters due to frequency of use, pp. 159-175.

13. Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Ham' al-Hawāmi' fī Sharḥ Jam' al-Jawāmi', ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqiyya), passage on deletion in ubālī under the jussive.

14. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, passage on qul, bi', and khaf and deletion of weak letters when two consonants meet, p. 273.

15. Sībawayh, al-Kitāb, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1st ed., 1988), passage on the operation of kāna and on the musnad and musnad ilayh, p. 23.

16. Ibn Ya'ish, Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ya'ish ibn 'Alī, Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal li-l-Zamakhsharī, ed. Emīl Badī' Ya'qūb, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1st ed., 1422 AH/2001), pp. 122-124.

17. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, passage beginning 'They abbreviate speech ...' and the discussion of the verses by Dhū al-Rumma and al-Namir ibn Tawlab, p. 214.

18. Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-'Arab, entry 'y-d-y', vol. 15, p. 419; see also al-Jawharī, al-Ṣiḥāḥ, entry 'y-d-y', vol. 6, p. 2539, on the original form of yad and the deletion of yā'.

19. Sībawayh, al-Kitāb, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1st ed., 1988), p. 47, passage on the operation of kāna and on the musnad and musnad ilayh.

The basic sentence, whether nominal or verbal, is thus built on two elements. These form the first unit of linguistic structure and support the remaining parts of the construction. A verb requires a subject because the meaning is not complete without it. Likewise, an initial noun requires a predicate for its meaning to be complete.

If a sentence lacks either the musnad or the musnad ilayh, its meaning becomes incomplete or obscure. The listener then has to reconstruct the absent, or deleted, element.

In a verbal sentence, the verb is the musnad and the subject is the musnad ilayh. The subject is therefore an essential element. It requires a verb or an equivalent form to complete the predicative relation. Predication is not established between two verbs, but between a verb and a noun or between two nouns. Sībawayh emphasizes this point: 'This is the chapter on the musnad and the musnad ilayh. Neither can dispense with the other ... An example is yadhabu 'Abd Allāh. A verb must have a noun.'

It follows that the subject, as musnad ilayh, is a core element of the verbal sentence. Yet it may be unexpressed when the verb itself provides evidence for it. The commentator on al-Mufaṣṣal reports: 'Al-Kisā'ī held that the subject is deleted and that the overt expression indicates it, while al-Farrā' did not recognize idmār before prior mention.'²⁰

Third: The Difference between Deletion and Idmār: In grammatical writing, idmār is sometimes used as a synonym for deletion. At other times, it means concealment or implicitness, especially when the discussion concerns pronouns. Sībawayh uses the term in the sense of deletion when he says: 'They left implicit what would otherwise occur overtly, for ease, and because the addressee knows what is intended. It thus came to function like a familiar expression. One may say lā 'alayka, while the addressee knows that the intended meaning is that there is no harm or difficulty for you.' Ibn Ya'īsh (d. 634 AH) also uses idmār in the sense of deletion. He writes: 'Know that this type of specification (ikhtisās) is not a vocative in the strict sense, although it follows the same pattern. It is accusative because of an implicit verb that is not used overtly.'²¹

Idmār can therefore function as a synonym for deletion in the works of grammarians. The two terms often overlap. A notable exception concerns the subject, where grammarians may speak of an implicit subject rather than a deleted subject.

Fourth: Levels of Deletion

The linguist Carter identifies several levels at which deletion may occur.²²

The outline in the source can be summarized as follows:

- Phonological level: lam yaku(n), with deletion of nūn.
- Morphological level: the source gives a form such as lam yaṣīl(ū), with deletion of wāw.
- Prosodic level: fā'ilātun may be reduced to fā'ilun.
- Syntactic level: deletion may occur at the level of the word, phrase, embedded sentence, or complete sentence.

The schematic also gives examples involving the lām of oath, the noun of kāna, an embedded clause, and an answer to an interrogative. These examples illustrate that the omitted element must be recoverable from the surrounding structure. The preceding discussion shows that deletion may occur at all levels of language. An element cannot be omitted unless some evidence points to what has been deleted. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH) states: 'They drop letters of a corresponding pattern for ease. They rely on what remains in place of what has been cast away whenever the speech contains an indication of what they delete from the word.'

Ibn Jinnī (d. 392 AH) likewise notes that deletion may affect a sentence, a single word, a vowel, or a consonant. He adds that such deletion cannot be assumed without evidence. Otherwise, identifying it would amount to claiming knowledge of the unseen.²³

Fifth: Examples of Deletion in Adab al-Kātib

1. Deletion Due to Frequency of Use

Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH) states: 'The Arabs likewise do this. They delete parts of an expression or a word, as in their saying lam yak when they mean lam yakun, and lam ubal when they mean lam ubāl.'²⁴

Sībawayh (d. 180 AH) supports Ibn Qutaybah's observation. He explains that the deletion of nūn from lam yakun and the deletion of alif from lam ubāl are related to frequent use.

Ibn al-Shajarī also explains such deletion by frequency. He notes that speakers delete the segment in this expression because it is used often, just as weak letters are deleted in forms such as lam yakhsha, lam yad'u, and lam yarmi. He

20. Ibn Ya'īsh, Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal, vol. 1, p. 77, passage on the deleted subject and the overt evidence that indicates it.

21. Ibn Ya'īsh, Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal li-l-Zamakhsharī, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1st ed., 1422 AH/2001), passage on specification (ikhtisās) and the implicit verb, p. 369.

22. Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥammūda, Zāhirat al-Ḥadhf fī al-Dars al-Lughawī (Alexandria: al-Dār al-Jāmi'iyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', uploaded edition, 1988), theoretical discussion of levels of deletion; the page should be checked against the scanned copy, p. 25.

23. Ibn Jinnī, al-Khaṣā'is, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār, vol. 2 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma lil-Kitāb, 4th ed., 1999), passage stating that deletion may affect the sentence, the single word, the consonant, and the vowel, p. 362.

24. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, p. 214, passage on deleting nūn from lam yakun and alif from lam ubāl.

adds that comparable verbs whose final radical is nūn do not show the same deletion because they are less frequent in use.²⁵

Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) similarly states that deletion is frequent in ubālī when the verb is jussive. Speakers say lam ubal, although the original form is lam ubāl, because the expression is used so often.²⁶

Al-Suyūṭī explains the deletion of the alif in ubālī by saying that speakers treated the lām as though it were the final consonant. They then made it quiescent under the effect of the jussive. The alif was consequently lost when two consonants came together. In this account, the form is based on attested usage and is also explained by frequency.

Frequent use is not, however, an analogical rule that automatically licenses deletion in every form. Such deletion is primarily based on attested Arabic usage. Not every frequently used expression undergoes deletion. Rather, when deletion is attested, frequency may help explain why it occurred.

2. Deletion for Analogical and Phonological Reasons: Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH) writes: 'In qul, bi', and khaf, the wāw, yā', and alif have disappeared because two consonants came together.'²⁷

Ibn al-Shajārī later comments on the same process. He states that weak letters are deleted from forms such as yakhāfu, yaqūlu, and yabī'u when the final radical is made quiescent by the jussive. In pause, this gives forms such as khaf, qul, and bi'. Elsewhere, he gives two reasons why a weak letter is more liable to deletion. First, the weak letter is less stable than a sound consonant. Second, when it is deleted, a corresponding vowel can indicate what has been omitted.

In khaf, the fatha on khā' points to the deleted alif. In qul, the damma on qāf indicates the deleted wāw. In bi', the kasra on bā' indicates the deleted yā'. In phonetic terms, the long vowel is shortened.

A modern phonetic interpretation therefore suggests that the process is not always the complete disappearance of vowel quantity. Rather, a long vowel may be shortened when followed by a consonant in an environment that does not permit the longer sequence. The result is a short vowel.

The underlying forms associated with qul, bi', and khaf are yaqūlu, yabī'u, and yakhāfu. When jussive marking introduces final quiescence, an impermissible or heavy sequence may arise. The vowel of the relevant syllable is then shortened, producing the reduced form. This provides a phonetic account of the traditional description in terms of deletion.

When the discussion returns specifically to Adab al-Kātib, two examples of broader deletion are identified in Ibn Qutaybah's text.

First example: Ibn Qutaybah states that the Arabs 'abbreviate speech by omitting material without which the expression would not be complete in its full form. They do this for ease and brevity when the addressee knows what they mean.' He then cites a verse by Dhū al-Rumma describing donkeys:²⁸

'When night enveloped us - or when it came on - she raised her ears toward it as it inclined.'

The relevant expression is 'or when she raised [them].' The verb and its subject are omitted. The reconstructed meaning is: 'or when night approached, she raised them toward it.' Ibn Qutaybah reports from al-Aṣma'ī that the intended meaning is that, when night approached, the animal raised its ears after they had been relaxed, while night was inclining over the day. The required element was therefore omitted.

Second example in Ibn Qutaybah:

Al-Namir ibn Tawlab says:

'Death - whoever fears it - will surely meet him wherever [he may be].'

The point of evidence is the expression 'wherever'. Ibn Qutaybah explains that the intended meaning is 'wherever he goes' or 'wherever he is'. The verb is omitted.

In other words, the verb dhahaba ('went') is deleted together with its implicit pronominal subject. This deletion serves brevity when the addressee already understands the intended meaning. It is a case of sentence deletion because a verb normally requires a subject to complete its predication. In grammatical terms, a governing element normally requires the element governed by it.

The basic principle is therefore attested Arabic usage (samā'). Where deletion is reported from the Arabs, the form is accepted as transmitted. Where it is not attested, a new form should not simply be created by analogy with an attested deletion.

Conclusion

This study traced the phenomenon of linguistic deletion in Ibn Qutaybah's Adab al-Kātib. The main findings can be summarized as follows:

25. Ibn al-Shajārī, *Amālī Ibn al-Shajārī*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1st ed., 1992), discussion of deletion of weak letters due to frequency of use.

26. Al-Suyūṭī, *Ham' al-Hawāmi' fi Sharḥ Jam' al-Jawāmi'*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī, vol. 3 (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqiyya), p. 211, passage on deletion in ubālī under the jussive.

27. Ibn Qutaybah, *Adab al-Kātib*, passage on qul, bi', and khaf and deletion of weak letters when two consonants meet, p. 273.

28. Ibn Qutaybah, *Adab al-Kātib*, p. 214, passage beginning 'They abbreviate speech ...' and the discussion of the verses by Dhū al-Rumma and al-Namir ibn Tawlab.

First, deletion is an established phenomenon in Arabic. In classical linguistic analysis, it is closely linked to reconstruction (taqdīr). An element can be omitted only when another feature of the utterance indicates what is missing. This preserves both meaning and structural coherence.

Second, the term *idmār* is used in several grammatical contexts in the sense of deletion. It can also refer to concealment or implicitness. The context must therefore determine which meaning is intended.

Third, deletion is not confined to one level of language. It may occur at the phonological, morphological, prosodic, and syntactic levels. It may also affect a word, a phrase, or a sentence. This shows the breadth of the phenomenon in Arabic usage.

Fourth, the examples in *Adab al-Kātib* include the deletion of *nūn* from *lam yakun* to give *lam yak*, the deletion of *alif* from *lam ubāl* to give *lam ubal*, and the deletion of weak letters in forms such as *qul*, *bi'*, and *khaf*. Some of these patterns are associated with frequent use. Others are linked to the meeting of two consonants and to ease of articulation. Fifth, scholars used frequency of use to explain several cases of deletion. Frequency does not, however, make deletion automatically analogical in every environment. The material examined here shows that many cases depend on attested speech and transmission from Arab speakers. Analogy is therefore limited by established Arabic usage.

Sixth, ease of articulation and the avoidance of phonetic heaviness are important in explaining several forms of deletion, especially the deletion of weak letters. In some cases, the remaining vowel signals the omitted segment. Meaning can therefore be preserved while pronunciation becomes lighter.

Seventh, Ibn Qutaybah's examples of sentence deletion show that Arabic speakers may omit material that would otherwise be required for full explicit expression. This occurs when the addressee already knows the intended meaning and a clear clue identifies the missing element. Deletion can therefore achieve brevity without preventing comprehension.

Deletion in *Adab al-Kātib* thus appears as a phenomenon with several levels and forms. It is governed by Arabic usage and attestation. Frequent use, ease of articulation, and the avoidance of phonetic heaviness explain many of its occurrences. A recoverable clue remains essential. Ibn Qutaybah's examples therefore show how Arabic can reduce phonological, morphological, and syntactic material while maintaining meaning and structural well-formedness.

The main conclusions may also be stated briefly as follows:

- Grammarians used *idmār* in the linguistic tradition as a term that may correspond to deletion.
- Deletion occurs at several levels of Arabic linguistic structure.
- Frequent use can encourage deletion.
- Deletion is one form of the tendency toward ease of articulation.

Notes

1. Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Alī, Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn al-Anṣārī al-Ifriqī, *Lisān al-'Arab*, entry 'ḥ-dh-f', vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 3rd ed., 1414 AH), p. 810.
2. Al-Jawharī, Ismā'īl ibn Ḥammād, al-Ṣiḥāḥ: Tāj al-Lughā wa-Ṣiḥāḥ al-'Arabiyya, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ghafūr 'Aṭṭār (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 4th ed., 1987), entry 'ḥ-dh-f', vol. 4, p. 1341.
3. Ibn Qutaybah, 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim, *Adab al-Kātib*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 1st ed., 1424 AH/2003), p. 213.
4. Sībawayh, 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān, al-Kitāb, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1st ed., 1988), vol. 1, chapter 'This is the chapter on what occurs in pronunciation as incidental phenomena' and 'What is deleted from words', p. 24.
5. Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥammūda, *Zāhirat al-Ḥadhf fī al-Dars al-Lughawī* (Alexandria: al-Dār al-Jāmi'iyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', uploaded edition, 1988), p. 7.
6. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, entry 's-q-ṭ', vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 3rd ed., 1414 AH), discussion of the loss of *alif* when two consonants meet; pagination varies between arrangements of the edition, p. 182.
7. Ibn Qutaybah, *Adab al-Kātib*, passage on deletion of letters and orthographic lightening, pp. 213-214.
8. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, entry 'kh-y-ṭ', vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 3rd ed., 1414 AH), p. 259.
9. Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥammūda, *Zāhirat al-Ḥadhf fī al-Dars al-Lughawī* (Alexandria: al-Dār al-Jāmi'iyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', uploaded edition, 1988), theoretical discussion of levels of deletion; the page should be checked against the scanned copy, p. 34.
10. Ibn Jinnī, Abū al-Faḍl 'Uthmān, al-Khaṣā'is, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār, vol. 2 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma lil-Kitāb, 4th ed., 1999), passage stating that deletion may affect the sentence, the single word, the consonant, and the vowel, p. 362.
11. Ibn Qutaybah, *Adab al-Kātib*, passage concerning deletion of *nūn* from *lam yakun* and *alif* from *lam ubāl*, p. 214.
12. Ibn al-Shajāri, Hibat Allāh ibn 'Alī, Amālī Ibn al-Shajāri, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanāḥī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1st ed., 1992), discussion of deletion of weak letters due to frequency of use, pp. 159-175.
13. Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Ham' al-Hawāmi' fī Sharḥ Jam' al-Jawāmi'*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqiyya), passage on the deletion in *ubālī* under the jussive.
14. Ibn Qutaybah, *Adab al-Kātib*, passage on *qul*, *bi'*, and *khaf* and deletion of weak letters when two consonants meet, p. 273.

15. Sībawayh, al-Kitāb, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1st ed., 1988), passage on the operation of kāna and on the musnad and musnad ilayh, p. 23.
16. Ibn Ya'īsh, Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ya'īsh ibn 'Alī, Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal li-l-Zamakhsharī, ed. Emīl Badī' Ya'qūb, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1st ed., 1422 AH/2001), pp. 122-124.
17. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, passage beginning 'They abbreviate speech ...' and the discussion of the verses by Dhū al-Rumma and al-Namir ibn Tawlab, p. 214.
18. Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-'Arab, entry 'y-d-y', vol. 15, p. 419; see also al-Jawharī, al-Ṣiḥāḥ, entry 'y-d-y', vol. 6, p. 2539, on the original form of yad and the deletion of yā'.
19. Ibn Ya'īsh, Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal li-l-Zamakhsharī, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1st ed., 1422 AH/2001), passage on specification (ikhtisās) and the implicit verb, p. 369.
20. Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥammūda, Zāhirat al-Ḥadhf fī al-Dars al-Lughawī (Alexandria: al-Dār al-Jāmi'iyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', uploaded edition, 1988), theoretical discussion of levels of deletion; the page should be checked against the scanned copy, p. 25.
21. Ibn Jinnī, al-Khaṣā'ish, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār, vol. 2 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma lil-Kitāb, 4th ed., 1999), passage stating that deletion may affect the sentence, the single word, the consonant, and the vowel, p. 362.
22. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, p. 214, passage on deleting nūn from lam yakun and alif from lam ubāl.
23. Ibn al-Shajārī, Amālī Ibn al-Shajārī, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1st ed., 1992), discussion of deletion of weak letters due to frequency of use.
24. Al-Suyūṭī, Ham' al-Hawāmi' fī Sharḥ Jam' al-Jawāmi', ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī, vol. 3 (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqiyya), p. 211, passage on the deletion in ubālī under the jussive.
25. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, passage on qul, bi', and khaf and deletion of weak letters when two consonants meet, p. 273.
26. Sībawayh, al-Kitāb, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1st ed., 1988), p. 47, passage on the operation of kāna and on the musnad and musnad ilayh.
27. Ibn Ya'īsh, Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal, vol. 1, p. 77, passage on the deleted subject and the overt evidence that indicates it.
28. Ibn Qutaybah, Adab al-Kātib, p. 214, passage beginning 'They abbreviate speech ...' and the discussion of the verses by Dhū al-Rumma and al-Namir ibn Tawlab.

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2. Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr. Ham' al-Hawāmi' fī Sharḥ Jam' al-Jawāmi'. Edited by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqiyya, vol. 3.
3. Ibn Qutaybah, 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim. Adab al-Kātib. Edited by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd. Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 1st ed., 1424 AH/2003.
4. Ibn Jinnī, Abū al-Faṭḥ 'Uthmān. al-Khaṣā'ish. Edited by Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār. Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma lil-Kitāb, 4th ed., 1999, vol. 2.
5. Sībawayh, 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān. al-Kitāb. Edited by 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1st ed., 1988, vol. 1.
6. Ḥammūda, Ṭāhir Sulaymān. Zāhirat al-Ḥadhf fī al-Dars al-Lughawī. Alexandria: al-Dār al-Jāmi'iyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 1988.
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8. Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Alī, Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn al-Anṣārī al-Ifrīqī. Lisān al-'Arab. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 3rd ed., 1414 AH.
9. Ibn Ya'īsh, Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ya'īsh ibn 'Alī. Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal li-l-Zamakhsharī. Edited by Emīl Badī' Ya'qūb. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1st ed., 1422 AH/2001.