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Language Shift and Lexical Attrition in Nias Language: A Sociolinguistic Study of Traditional Vocabulary among Young Speakers

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Abstract

Language shift has become a significant concern for many minority languages, including the Nias language, as increasing modernization and the dominance of national languages influence local language use. This study investigates language shift and lexical attrition in traditional Nias vocabulary among young speakers. The study aims to identify traditional lexical items that have undergone language shift, examine the factors contributing to lexical attrition, and explore the influence of modernization on language maintenance. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the study analyzed traditional Nias vocabulary through documentation, a vocabulary checklist, and semi-structured interviews with young Nias speakers aged 18–25 years. The findings reveal that several traditional lexical items, such as *Höma* (livestock-pen toilet), *Bate'e* (traditional sleeping room), *Fogao* (traditional coconut grater), Solo (bamboo lamp), *Fandru Gasi* (gas lamp), and *Takula* (traditional hat), are increasingly being replaced by Indonesian equivalents. The study identifies modernization, technological advancement, and the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia as the primary factors contributing to lexical attrition. Furthermore, lexical variations among North Nias, South Nias, and West Nias dialects demonstrate the linguistic diversity of the Nias language despite the ongoing language shift. The findings highlight the importance of language maintenance efforts through documentation, education, and community participation to preserve traditional Nias vocabulary and safeguard the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Nias people.

Keywords: language maintenance, language shift, lexical attrition, Nias language, sociolinguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a means of communication but also a repository of cultural knowledge, identity, and collective memory. The loss of linguistic elements, particularly traditional vocabulary, often signals broader social and cultural changes within a speech community. In multilingual societies, language shift frequently occurs when speakers gradually replace their ancestral language with a more dominant language that offers greater social, educational, or economic advantages. As a result, many indigenous and regional languages face challenges in maintaining their vitality, especially among younger generations.

Indonesia is home to hundreds of local languages, many of which are experiencing varying degrees of language shift due to modernization, urbanization, formal education, and the increasing dominance of Bahasa Indonesia. While the national language plays an essential role in promoting national unity, its widespread use has also contributed to the declining use of local languages in everyday communication. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the lexical domain, where

traditional words are increasingly replaced by Indonesian equivalents. Such lexical replacement may eventually lead to lexical attrition, a process in which speakers gradually lose knowledge and use of vocabulary from their heritage language.

The Nias language, spoken on Nias Island in North Sumatra Province, represents one of Indonesia's rich linguistic heritages. Despite its continued use in many communities, evidence suggests that several traditional lexical items are becoming less familiar to younger speakers. Words that were once commonly used in daily life have been replaced by Indonesian terms as a result of technological developments and changing lifestyles. For example, the traditional Nias word Höma (livestock-pen toilet) has largely been replaced by the Indonesian word WC (toilet), reflecting changes in sanitation practices. Similarly, Bate'e (traditional sleeping room) is increasingly replaced by kamar (bedroom), while Fogao (traditional coconut grater) has become less common due to the use of modern coconut-grating machines. Other traditional terms such as Solo (bamboo lamp), Fandru Gasi (gas lamp), and Takula (traditional hat) are also gradually disappearing from everyday speech.

Previous studies on language shift have primarily focused on intergenerational language transmission, bilingualism, and language maintenance in minority-language communities. Research has demonstrated that social mobility, educational policies, migration, and technological advancement are among the major factors contributing to language shift. However, relatively few studies have specifically examined lexical attrition in the Nias language, particularly concerning traditional vocabulary that reflects cultural practices and material culture. Most existing studies discuss language maintenance at a general level without providing detailed analyses of how individual lexical items disappear from daily communication.

This study addresses that gap by investigating the phenomenon of language shift through the lens of lexical attrition in the Nias language. It focuses on traditional vocabulary that is increasingly replaced by Indonesian terms among younger speakers. By examining the factors that contribute to lexical replacement and identifying vocabulary items that are vulnerable to loss, the study contributes to a better understanding of language change in minority-language communities. Furthermore, the findings are expected to support language maintenance efforts by documenting traditional Nias vocabulary and raising awareness of the importance of preserving linguistic and cultural heritage.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) What traditional Nias vocabulary items have undergone language shift among younger speakers? (2) What factors contribute to the lexical attrition of traditional Nias vocabulary? and (3) How does modernization influence the maintenance of traditional vocabulary in the Nias language? The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into the relationship between language, culture, and social change, as well as to contribute to ongoing discussions on language preservation in multilingual societies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language Shift

Language shift is one of the central topics in sociolinguistics, particularly in multilingual societies where two or more languages coexist. The concept refers to a gradual process in which a speech community abandons its traditional language and adopts another language for daily communication. This phenomenon commonly occurs when a dominant language offers greater social, educational, economic, or political advantages than the heritage language.

According to Joshua Fishman (1991), language shift occurs when a community increasingly uses a dominant language in various domains of life while reducing the use of its ancestral language. Fishman argues that language shift is often associated with intergenerational transmission failure, whereby younger generations no longer acquire or actively use the heritage language. He emphasizes

that the survival of a language largely depends on its continued use within families and local communities.

Similarly, Janet Holmes (2013) defines language shift as a process in which speakers gradually move from one language to another because the new language is perceived as more useful or prestigious. Holmes notes that language shift is frequently influenced by social mobility, education, migration, urbanization, and contact with dominant linguistic groups.

Furthermore, Ronald Wardhaugh (2015) states that language shift reflects social change within a community. When social conditions change, language use also changes, resulting in the gradual replacement of traditional linguistic forms. Wardhaugh argues that language choice is often shaped by social identity and the communicative needs of speakers.

In the context of the Nias language, language shift can be observed in the decreasing use of traditional lexical items among younger speakers. Words that were once commonly used in daily activities are gradually being replaced by Indonesian equivalents. Such replacement indicates not only linguistic change but also broader cultural and social transformation.

2.2 Lexical Attrition

Lexical attrition refers to the gradual loss of vocabulary knowledge and usage within a language community or individual speaker. It is considered one of the earliest indicators of language shift because vocabulary items are often replaced before grammatical structures disappear.

According to Schmid (2011), lexical attrition occurs when speakers experience reduced exposure to and use of particular words over time. As a result, traditional vocabulary becomes less accessible and may eventually disappear from everyday communication. This process is especially common in minority-language communities that experience intensive contact with a dominant language.

Montrul (2016) explains that lexical attrition is strongly influenced by frequency of use. Vocabulary items that are rarely used in contemporary life are more likely to be forgotten or replaced. The process is accelerated when social and technological developments introduce new concepts that are more easily expressed through the dominant language.

Traditional Nias vocabulary provides a clear example of lexical attrition. Several lexical items have become obsolete because the objects or practices they refer to are no longer part of everyday life. For instance, "Höma" (livestock-pen toilet) has largely been replaced by the Indonesian term (toilet) due to improvements in sanitation systems. Likewise, "Solo" (bamboo lamp) and "Fandru Gasi" (gas lamp) have become increasingly unfamiliar to younger speakers because electric lighting is now widely available.

Lexical attrition is not merely a linguistic phenomenon; it also reflects cultural change. When traditional words disappear, the cultural knowledge embedded in those words may also be lost. Therefore, documenting endangered vocabulary is an important step in preserving linguistic and cultural heritage.

2.3 Language Maintenance and Minority Languages

Language maintenance refers to the efforts made by individuals and communities to continue using their heritage language despite pressures from a dominant language. It is often viewed as the opposite of language shift. While language shift leads to language loss, language maintenance seeks to preserve linguistic vitality and cultural identity.

Fishman (1991) argues that successful language maintenance depends on the continued transmission of the language across generations. Families play a crucial role because children are more likely to maintain their heritage language when it is actively used at home. Schools, community organizations, and local governments also contribute to language maintenance through educational programs and cultural activities. Crystal (2000) emphasizes that language preservation is important

because every language represents a unique way of understanding the world. The disappearance of a language results in the loss of cultural traditions, indigenous knowledge, and historical memory. Consequently, efforts to maintain minority languages are essential for safeguarding cultural diversity.

The Nias language represents an important component of Indonesia's linguistic diversity. However, the increasing dominance of Bahasa Indonesia, technological modernization, and changing lifestyles may reduce opportunities for younger generations to use traditional Nias vocabulary. If such trends continue, more lexical items may disappear from everyday communication. Therefore, documenting traditional Nias vocabulary and examining the factors contributing to its decline are important aspects of language maintenance. Through systematic documentation and educational initiatives, communities can preserve linguistic resources that reflect their cultural identity and historical heritage.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in Fishman's theory of language shift and language maintenance, which explains how social change influences language use within a community. The study also adopts the concept of lexical attrition proposed by Schmid (2011), which describes the gradual loss of vocabulary due to reduced usage and language contact.

The framework assumes that modernization, technological advancement, and the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia contribute to language shift among Nias speakers. These factors lead to lexical attrition, particularly in traditional vocabulary associated with past cultural practices and material culture. As traditional lexical items are replaced by Indonesian equivalents, the vitality of the Nias language may gradually decline. Consequently, identifying and documenting vulnerable vocabulary items can support future language maintenance efforts.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The Research Methods section describes in detail how the study was conducted. A complete description of the methods used enables the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of the research methodology.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate language shift and lexical attrition in traditional Nias vocabulary among young speakers. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring linguistic phenomena within their social and cultural contexts and for understanding how speakers perceive and use language in their daily lives. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research enables researchers to explore and interpret meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems.

The study focused on identifying traditional Nias lexical items that are gradually disappearing from everyday communication and examining the factors contributing to their replacement by Indonesian equivalents. A descriptive approach was chosen because the study aimed to describe the existing condition of language use rather than to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships. Through this approach, the researcher documented traditional vocabulary, analyzed patterns of lexical replacement, and explored the influence of modernization and language contact on vocabulary use among younger speakers.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 15 young Nias speakers aged between 18 and 25 years. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because they represented the younger generation who are increasingly exposed to Indonesian and modern communication practices. All participants were native speakers of Nias and resided in Nias Regency, North Sumatra Province. Their linguistic experiences provided valuable insights into the use of traditional vocabulary and the ongoing process of lexical attrition among younger speakers.

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants.

Age Range	Frequency
18-20	5
21–23	6
24–25	4
Total Participants	15

3.3 Instruments

Three instruments were employed to collect the data: a vocabulary checklist, semi-structured interviews, and documentation.

a. Vocabulary Checklist

A vocabulary checklist containing traditional Nias lexical items was developed based on preliminary observations and existing linguistic records. The checklist included traditional vocabulary that has become less frequently used in contemporary communication, such as *"Höma"* (livestock-pen toilet), "*Bate'e"* (traditional sleeping room), "*Fogao*" (traditional coconut grater), "*Solo*" (bamboo lamp), "*Fandru Gasi*" (gas lamp), and "*Takula*" (traditional hat).

Participants were asked to indicate whether they recognized, understood, and actively used each lexical item in daily communication. The checklist helped identify vocabulary items that were vulnerable to lexical attrition.

b. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into participants' language use patterns and attitudes toward traditional Nias vocabulary. The interviews focused on participants' frequency of Nias language use, familiarity with traditional lexical items, reasons for vocabulary replacement, and perceptions of language maintenance.

Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was conducted either in Indonesian or Nias, depending on the participants' preferences. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

c. Documentation

Documentation was used to support the findings obtained from the vocabulary checklist and interviews. Relevant documents included linguistic notes, vocabulary lists, and records of traditional Nias terms. The documentation process also involved recording examples of lexical items that have been replaced by Indonesian equivalents in contemporary communication.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.

a. Data Condensation

The first stage involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing the data obtained from the vocabulary checklist, interviews, and documentation. Interview transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to identify information related to language shift, lexical attrition, and language maintenance.

b. Data Display

After the data had been condensed, the researcher organized the findings into tables and thematic categories. Traditional Nias vocabulary items were grouped according to their level of usage and the factors contributing to their decline. This stage facilitated the identification of patterns and relationships among the data.

c. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final stage involved interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions regarding the occurrence of language shift and lexical attrition in traditional Nias vocabulary. The conclusions were continuously verified by comparing information from different data sources to ensure consistency and credibility. The researcher also examined recurring themes related to modernization, technological development, and the influence of Bahasa Indonesia on vocabulary replacement.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from the vocabulary checklist, interviews, and documentation. This process helped ensure the validity and reliability of the research results.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study concerning language shift and lexical attrition in traditional Nias vocabulary among young speakers. The findings are based on vocabulary documentation and interview data collected from Nias speakers. The results reveal that several traditional lexical items have undergone language shift and are increasingly being replaced by Indonesian equivalents. In addition, lexical variations among North Nias, South Nias, and West Nias dialects were identified.

4.1 Traditional Nias Vocabulary Experiencing Language Shift

One of the major findings of this study is the declining use of traditional Nias vocabulary in everyday communication. Several lexical items that were commonly used by older generations are now rarely recognized or actively used by younger speakers. Instead, Indonesian words have become the preferred lexical choices.

Table 2. Traditional Nias Vocabulary Experiencing Language Shift

No	Traditional Nias Word	English Meaning	Reason for Shift
1	*Höma*	Livestock-pen toilet	Because in the past, people threw feces in livestock pens, now every house has its own toilet
2	*Bate'e*	Traditional sleeping room	"Bate'e" is rarely used because people now prefer to use the word "*Kamar*."
3	*Fogao*	Traditional coconut grater	"*Fogao*" is very rarely used by the people because it has been replaced by coconut shaving machines
4	*Solo*	Bamboo lamp	"*Solo*" is no longer used because it has been replaced by a flashlight
5	*Fandru gasi*	Gas lamp	"*Fandru gasi*" is no longer used because there are already electric lights
6	*Takula*	Traditional hat	"*Takula*" is very rarely used because it was changed to "*Tofi"*

The findings indicate that traditional vocabulary associated with old technologies and traditional lifestyles is particularly vulnerable to lexical attrition. Words such as Solo (bamboo lamp) and Fandru Gasi (gas lamp) are rarely used because the objects they refer to have become obsolete. Likewise, Fogao (traditional coconut grater) has largely disappeared from daily communication due to the widespread use of mechanical coconut-grating machines.

Interview data revealed that many young speakers were familiar with the Indonesian equivalents but had limited knowledge of the traditional Nias terms. Some participants reported that they had only heard these words from grandparents or older relatives and had never used them in their own conversations.

Several participants acknowledged that traditional Nias vocabulary is rarely used in everyday communication.

Participant 3 stated:

"I know the word Fogao, but I usually say dapur because everyone around me uses Indonesian."

Similarly, Participant 8 commented:

"My grandparents still use traditional words, but among young people we prefer Indonesian because it is easier and more familiar."

Participant 12 explained:

"Some traditional words are only heard during cultural ceremonies. In daily conversations, we rarely use them."

These excerpts illustrate the decreasing use of traditional vocabulary among younger Nias speakers and support the findings regarding lexical attrition.

4.2 Factors Contributing to Lexical Attrition

The analysis identified three major factors contributing to the decline of traditional Nias vocabulary: modernization, technological development, and the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia.

a. Modernization

Modernization has significantly altered the lifestyles of Nias communities. Traditional practices and objects have gradually been replaced by modern alternatives, resulting in reduced use of the vocabulary associated with those practices. For example, "*Höma"* originally referred to a traditional toilet located near livestock areas. Since modern household toilets are now commonly available, the Indonesian term toilet has replaced the traditional Nias term in everyday communication.

Similarly, the use of Takula (traditional hat) has declined because traditional attire is no longer worn regularly in daily life. Younger speakers prefer using the Indonesian word topi (hat), which they encounter more frequently through education and media.

b. Technological Development

Technological advancement emerged as another significant factor influencing lexical attrition. Several traditional objects have become obsolete due to technological innovations. For instance, Solo (bamboo lamp) and "*Fandru Gasi"* (gas lamp) were once essential household items before the introduction of electricity. As electric lighting became widespread, these traditional objects disappeared from daily life, causing the corresponding vocabulary to become increasingly unfamiliar to younger generations. Likewise, "*Fogad*" (traditional coconut grater) has been replaced by mechanical or electric coconut-grating machines. As a result, younger speakers rarely encounter the traditional term.

c. Dominance of Bahasa Indonesia

The findings also reveal the strong influence of Bahasa Indonesia on lexical choice. Indonesian functions as the language of education, government, media, and wider communication. Consequently, younger speakers frequently use Indonesian vocabulary even when communicating in Nias-speaking environments. Several participants stated that Indonesian words were easier to understand because they are more frequently used in schools, social media, and public communication. This tendency has accelerated the replacement of traditional Nias vocabulary with Indonesian equivalents.

4.3 Lexical Variation among Nias Dialects

The study also documented lexical differences among North Nias, South Nias, and West Nias dialects. The findings demonstrate that lexical variation remains an important characteristic of the Nias language.

Table 3. Lexical Variation across Nias Dialects

No	Indonesian	North Nias	South Nias	West Nias	English Meaning
1	*Kelapa*	*Sekhula*	*Banio*	*Banio*	Coconut

2	*Gigi*	*Ifö*	*Ngingi*	*Ifö*	Tooth
3	*Berdiri*	*Sidro*	*Zizio*	*Mozizio*	Stand
4	*Ini*	*Ha'a*	*Da'a*	*Da'a*	This
5	*Itu*	*Hö'ö*	*Da'ö*	*Da'ö*	That
6	*Mau ke mana kamu?*	*Hezo numalö'ö?*	*Haega gö möi?*	*Hendre möi'ö?*	Where are you going?
7	*Memaki*	*Ikha'ai banio*	*Falele*	*Falele*	To scold
8	*Lubang*	*Tögi*	*Lubo-lubo*	*Tögi*	Hole
9	*Pengantin perempuan*	*Mbene'ö*	*Ononihalö*	*Ni'owalu*	Bride
10	*Duduklah di depan sini!*	*Odadao föna ba da'a!*	*Mutataro gaö!*	*Dadao föna ba da'a!*	Sit here in front!
11	*Pergilah dari sini!*	*Ofanö ba da'a!*	*Ofanö gane!*	*Böi agö da'a!*	Go away from here!
12	*Dandang*	*Kuali*	*Balanga*	*Böröwa*	Cooking pot
13	*Nasihat*	*Wotu*	*Degu-degu*	*Mene-mene*	Advice
14	*Mencari*	*Wangalui*	*Wanalui*	*Wangobini*	Search
15	*Hukuman*	*Huku*	*Huku*	*Wogau*	Punishment

The data show that although the three dialects share a common linguistic origin, substantial lexical differences exist across regions. Some lexical items remain relatively similar, while others demonstrate considerable variation.

For example, the word meaning "coconut" is expressed as Sekhula in North Nias but as Banio in both South and West Nias. Similarly, the expression "Where are you going?" exhibits significant variation across all three dialects. These differences reflect the linguistic diversity that exists within the Nias speech community.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that language shift is occurring in the lexical domain of the Nias language. Traditional vocabulary associated with historical lifestyles, cultural practices, and traditional technologies is gradually being replaced by Indonesian lexical items. Modernization, technological advancement, and the dominant role of Bahasa Indonesia emerged as the primary factors contributing to lexical attrition.

Furthermore, the study identified considerable lexical variation among North Nias, South Nias, and West Nias dialects, indicating that the Nias language remains linguistically diverse despite the pressures of language shift. The documentation of these lexical items contributes to efforts aimed at preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Nias community.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that traditional Nias vocabulary is undergoing a process of language shift and lexical attrition among younger speakers. Several traditional lexical items have been replaced by Indonesian equivalents due to modernization, technological development, and increased

exposure to Bahasa Indonesia. These findings support existing sociolinguistic theories concerning language shift and contribute to the understanding of lexical change in minority-language communities.

The observed dialectal variations among North, South, and West Nias dialects provide additional evidence of linguistic diversity within the Nias speech community. Although the primary focus of this study is lexical attrition, dialectal variation offers important contextual information regarding how traditional vocabulary is maintained or replaced across different regional varieties. The findings suggest that language shift may not occur uniformly across dialects, highlighting the need for future comparative investigations.

5.1 Language Shift in Traditional Nias Vocabulary

One of the major findings of this study is the gradual replacement of traditional Nias lexical items with Indonesian vocabulary. Traditional words such as "*Höma*" (livestock-pen toilet), "Bate'e" (traditional sleeping room), "*Solo*" (bamboo lamp), and "*Fandru Gasi*" (gas lamp) are increasingly unfamiliar to younger speakers, who prefer Indonesian alternatives.

This phenomenon is consistent with Fishman's (1991) theory of language shift, which states that a language begins to lose vitality when speakers progressively abandon traditional linguistic forms in favor of a more dominant language. Fishman argues that language shift often occurs when younger generations perceive another language as more useful for communication, education, and social mobility. In the context of this study, Indonesian serves as the dominant language in schools, government institutions, mass media, and digital communication. Consequently, young Nias speakers are more likely to use Indonesian lexical items than traditional Nias vocabulary.

The findings also support Holmes' (2013) view that language choice is influenced by social factors and communicative needs. According to Holmes, speakers tend to select linguistic forms that are widely understood and socially advantageous. Since Indonesian has become the primary language of formal communication in Indonesia, many traditional Nias terms are no longer actively transmitted to younger generations.

Furthermore, the decline of traditional vocabulary reflects broader social transformation within the Nias community. Language does not change independently from society; rather, linguistic change often mirrors cultural and technological developments. As traditional lifestyles become less common, the vocabulary associated with those lifestyles gradually loses relevance and frequency of use.

5.2 Lexical Attrition as a Consequence of Modernization

The results demonstrate that lexical attrition is occurring in the Nias language, particularly in vocabulary associated with traditional objects, occupations, and cultural practices. Lexical attrition refers to the gradual loss of vocabulary resulting from reduced use and exposure.

Schmid (2011) explains that words that are rarely used become increasingly vulnerable to attrition. This process is evident in the present study. For example, "*Solo*" (bamboo lamp) and "*Fandru Gasi*" (gas lamp) have become largely obsolete because electric lighting has replaced traditional lighting systems. Similarly, "*Fogao*" (traditional coconut grater) is rarely used because mechanical and electric coconut-grating machines have become more common.

These findings suggest that lexical attrition is closely connected to technological development. When objects disappear from everyday life, the vocabulary associated with them often disappears as well. This observation supports Montrul's (2016) argument that language attrition is strongly influenced by the frequency with which speakers encounter and use particular lexical items.

Moreover, lexical attrition represents more than the loss of individual words. Traditional vocabulary often carries cultural meanings, historical experiences, and indigenous knowledge. Therefore, the disappearance of traditional lexical items may also result in the erosion of cultural memory. For instance, younger speakers who are unfamiliar with terms such as *Höma* or *Takula*

may also have limited knowledge of the traditional practices and cultural contexts associated with those words.

5.3 The Influence of Bahasa Indonesia on Language Choice

Another significant finding concerns the dominant role of Bahasa Indonesia in shaping language use among younger Nias speakers. Interview data revealed that participants frequently preferred Indonesian vocabulary because it was more familiar, easier to understand, and more commonly used in educational and social settings.

This finding aligns with Wardhaugh and Fuller's (2015) assertion that language choice is closely related to social prestige and communicative efficiency. Speakers often adopt linguistic forms that facilitate broader communication and social integration. Since Indonesian functions as the national language and lingua franca of Indonesia, it naturally exerts considerable influence on local languages.

The increasing use of Indonesian vocabulary can also be explained through language contact theory. When two languages coexist within a speech community, linguistic borrowing and lexical replacement commonly occur. Over time, repeated use of borrowed or dominant-language vocabulary may contribute to language shift and eventual language loss if heritage-language forms are no longer transmitted to younger generations.

Although the influence of Indonesian has facilitated communication across diverse linguistic communities, the findings suggest that it has also accelerated the decline of traditional Nias vocabulary. This situation reflects a common challenge faced by minority languages throughout the world, where dominant national languages coexist with local languages that possess fewer institutional supports.

5.4 Implications for Language Maintenance and Cultural Preservation

The findings of this study have important implications for language maintenance and cultural preservation. Fishman (1991) emphasizes that the long-term survival of a language depends largely on intergenerational transmission. When younger generations cease to learn and use traditional vocabulary, language shift becomes increasingly difficult to reverse.

The present study demonstrates that several traditional Nias lexical items are already at risk of disappearing from everyday communication. If this trend continues, additional vocabulary items may become obsolete in future generations. Consequently, efforts to document and preserve traditional vocabulary are urgently needed.

Crystal (2000) argues that every language embodies a unique worldview and cultural heritage. The loss of a language—or even part of its vocabulary—represents the loss of valuable cultural knowledge accumulated over generations. Therefore, preserving traditional Nias vocabulary is not only a linguistic concern but also a cultural responsibility.

Several practical measures may contribute to language maintenance. First, traditional vocabulary can be incorporated into local educational materials and language-learning programs. Second, community-based cultural activities can encourage younger generations to use traditional Nias expressions. Third, digital documentation projects can preserve traditional vocabulary for future generations through dictionaries, mobile applications, and online archives.

Ultimately, language maintenance requires collaboration among families, schools, cultural organizations, and local governments. By promoting awareness of the cultural value embedded in traditional vocabulary, communities can strengthen efforts to preserve the linguistic heritage of the Nias people.

5.5 Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to the sociolinguistic literature by providing empirical evidence of language shift and lexical attrition in the Nias language. While previous studies have generally focused

on language maintenance and bilingualism, the present study specifically examines the decline of traditional vocabulary and its relationship with modernization and technological change.

Additionally, the study documents lexical items that may become increasingly endangered in the future. Such documentation contributes to ongoing efforts to preserve Indonesia's linguistic diversity and provides a foundation for future research on language revitalization, lexical preservation, and minority-language sustainability.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated language shift and lexical attrition in traditional Nias vocabulary among young speakers. The findings revealed that several traditional lexical items, including *Höma* (livestock-pen toilet), "*Bate'e*" (traditional sleeping room), "*Fogao*" (traditional coconut grater), "*Solo*" (bamboo lamp), "*Fandru Gasi*" (gas lamp), and "*Takula*" (traditional hat), are increasingly being replaced by Indonesian equivalents. This shift indicates a gradual decline in the use of traditional vocabulary within the Nias speech community, particularly among younger generations.

The study identified modernization, technological advancement, and the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia as the primary factors contributing to lexical attrition. As traditional objects and practices become less common in daily life, the vocabulary associated with them is also disappearing. Furthermore, the widespread use of Indonesian in education, media, and social interactions has accelerated the replacement of traditional Nias lexical items. The findings also revealed the existence of lexical variation among North Nias, South Nias, and West Nias dialects, demonstrating the linguistic richness and diversity of the Nias language.

This study contributes to the understanding of language shift in minority-language communities by highlighting the relationship between social change and vocabulary loss. The documentation of traditional Nias vocabulary serves as an important effort to preserve linguistic and cultural heritage. Therefore, language maintenance initiatives should be strengthened through family transmission, educational programs, community participation, and digital documentation projects. Future studies may investigate language shift across different age groups and explore strategies for revitalizing endangered vocabulary in the Nias language.

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