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The Impact of Modernization on Traditional Batak Toba Vocabulary: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Language Shift

Narambean Simanjuntak
SMA Negeri 9 Medan
narambean.simanjuntak90@gmail.com

Abstract

Language shift has become a significant sociolinguistic phenomenon in multilingual societies undergoing rapid social and cultural transformation. This study investigates the impact of modernization on traditional Batak Toba vocabulary through a sociolinguistic analysis of language shift. The study aims to identify traditional lexical items that have experienced declining usage and to examine how modernization contributes to changes in vocabulary use within the Batak Toba speech community. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research utilized document analysis to examine traditional Batak Toba lexical items and their contemporary Indonesian equivalents. The data consisted of twenty traditional lexical items representing various semantic domains, including settlement, geography, agriculture, social relationships, and cultural practices. The findings reveal that many traditional Batak Toba words, such as *huta, sopo, dolok, and aek*, are increasingly being replaced by Indonesian equivalents in everyday communication. The results further indicate that modernization, formal education, technological advancement, and increased exposure to Indonesian have accelerated lexical replacement, particularly among younger generations. However, several culturally significant lexical items associated with customary institutions and traditional ceremonies continue to be maintained within specific cultural domains. These findings suggest that language shift in the Batak Toba community is occurring primarily at the lexical level and reflects broader sociocultural transformations influenced by modernization. The study concludes that while language change is a natural consequence of social development, the preservation of traditional vocabulary remains essential for maintaining cultural identity, linguistic diversity, and indigenous knowledge. This research contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship by highlighting the relationship between modernization and lexical language shift in contemporary Batak Toba society.

Keywords: language shift, lexical change, modernization, sociolinguistics, traditional Batak Toba vocabulary

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a medium of communication but also a symbol of cultural identity, social belonging, and collective memory. Through language, communities preserve their traditions, transmit cultural knowledge, and maintain social cohesion across generations. However, in many parts of the world, local and minority languages are increasingly threatened by social change, globalization, urbanization, and modernization. As communities become more integrated into national and global

networks, traditional linguistic practices often undergo significant transformation, resulting in the gradual replacement of indigenous linguistic forms by more dominant languages or modern lexical alternatives.

One of the most widely discussed phenomena in sociolinguistics is language shift. Language shift occurs when a speech community gradually reduces the use of its traditional language and increasingly adopts another language or linguistic variety in daily communication. Fishman (1991) defines language shift as a process in which "a speech community of a language shifts to another language" over time, particularly when the new language offers greater social, economic, educational, or political advantages. Similarly, Holmes (2013) argues that language shift commonly occurs when speakers perceive another language as more useful or prestigious than their ancestral language. Consequently, traditional linguistic forms may become less frequently used and eventually disappear from everyday communication.

The phenomenon of language shift is particularly evident in multilingual societies, where local languages coexist with national and international languages. Indonesia is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with more than 700 regional languages spoken across the archipelago. While this linguistic diversity represents a valuable cultural resource, many local languages are currently experiencing challenges related to intergenerational transmission and changing language practices. The increasing influence of Indonesian as the national language, combined with the growing impact of modernization, mass media, technology, and formal education, has contributed to changes in language use among younger generations.

Among the many indigenous languages of Indonesia, Batak Toba occupies an important position as a marker of ethnic identity and cultural heritage in North Sumatra. The language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for transmitting traditional knowledge, customary practices, kinship systems, and cultural values. Nevertheless, like many regional languages, Batak Toba has been affected by sociocultural changes occurring in contemporary society. Traditional lexical items that were once widely used in everyday communication are gradually being replaced by Indonesian equivalents or modern expressions. This phenomenon reflects broader processes of linguistic adaptation and cultural transformation within Batak communities.

Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) explain that language shift is often associated with social mobility, urbanization, educational advancement, and economic development. As individuals participate in wider social networks, they may increasingly favor linguistic forms that provide greater communicative efficiency and social acceptance. In this context, modernization functions as a powerful catalyst for linguistic change. Traditional vocabulary associated with agriculture, customary life, local institutions, and indigenous knowledge systems may become less relevant as social practices evolve. Consequently, certain lexical items may survive only among older speakers, while younger generations become more familiar with modern or nationally dominant alternatives.

The decline in the use of traditional vocabulary has important implications beyond language itself. Crystal (2000) emphasizes that "when a language dies, a unique way of understanding the world dies with it" (p. 14). Although the present study does not investigate language death, the gradual disappearance of traditional lexical items may represent an early indicator of language shift and cultural erosion. Lexical change often reflects broader sociocultural transformations and may signal changing patterns of identity, social interaction, and cultural transmission within a community.

Previous studies have examined language shift in various Indonesian contexts. Research has shown that modernization, migration, formal education, and increased use of Indonesian frequently contribute to the reduced use of local languages among younger speakers. Studies on regional languages in Indonesia have reported a growing tendency for traditional linguistic forms to be replaced by more widely understood national-language equivalents, particularly in urban and semi-urban communities. Similar findings have also been reported in studies of minority languages

worldwide, where socioeconomic development and modernization influence language choice and language maintenance practices.

Despite the growing body of research on language shift, relatively few studies have specifically examined the impact of modernization on traditional Batak Toba vocabulary. Existing studies tend to focus on language maintenance, bilingualism, or language attitudes, while lexical-level changes resulting from modernization remain underexplored. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the gradual replacement of traditional lexical items by modern Indonesian equivalents and the sociocultural factors underlying this process. Understanding these lexical changes is important because vocabulary often serves as one of the most visible indicators of linguistic and cultural transformation.

Therefore, this study investigates the impact of modernization on traditional Batak Toba vocabulary through a sociolinguistic analysis of language shift. Specifically, the study aims to identify traditional lexical items that are experiencing reduced usage and to examine how modernization contributes to changes in vocabulary use among Batak Toba speakers. By documenting lexical shifts and exploring their sociocultural implications, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discussion of language maintenance, cultural preservation, and linguistic change in multilingual societies.

The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for linguists, educators, cultural practitioners, and policymakers concerned with the preservation of local languages in Indonesia. Moreover, the study contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship by highlighting how modernization influences language practices at the lexical level and by demonstrating the relationship between language change and cultural continuity in contemporary Batak Toba society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language and society, focusing on how social factors influence language use, variation, and change. According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021), sociolinguistics seeks to understand why people speak differently in different social contexts and how language reflects social identities, relationships, and cultural values. Language is not merely a system of communication; it is also a social practice shaped by historical, political, economic, and cultural influences.

Holmes (2013) emphasizes that language choices often reflect social circumstances such as age, gender, ethnicity, social status, and educational background. In multilingual societies, speakers frequently adjust their linguistic behavior according to context and communicative needs. Such adjustments may contribute to language maintenance, language shift, or the emergence of new linguistic forms. Consequently, sociolinguistics provides an appropriate framework for examining how modernization influences vocabulary use within a speech community.

Language change is a natural aspect of linguistic development. As societies evolve, language adapts to new social realities, technological advancements, and cultural transformations. However, when changes occur rapidly, traditional linguistic elements may become marginalized or disappear from everyday communication. Understanding these processes is therefore essential for examining the relationship between modernization and lexical change.

2.1 Language Shift

Language shift is one of the central concepts in sociolinguistics. It refers to the gradual process through which a community reduces its use of a traditional language and increasingly adopts another language or linguistic variety. Fishman (1991) describes language shift as a situation in which a speech community progressively abandons its ancestral language in favor of a more dominant language. This process often occurs over several generations and may eventually result in language loss.

According to Holmes (2013), language shift frequently emerges when speakers perceive another language as offering greater social, economic, educational, or political benefits. In multilingual settings, younger generations may prefer a dominant language because it provides broader opportunities for communication and social mobility. As a result, local languages may experience reduced usage, particularly in formal and public domains.

Fishman (1991) further argues that language shift is closely related to intergenerational language transmission. When younger speakers no longer actively use traditional linguistic forms, the continuity of the language becomes vulnerable. Although language shift does not necessarily lead to immediate language extinction, it often affects specific linguistic features, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures.

In the context of regional languages, lexical replacement is frequently one of the earliest indicators of language shift. Traditional words may gradually be substituted by more widely recognized alternatives, reflecting changing communicative preferences and sociocultural conditions.

2.2 Modernization and Language Change

Modernization refers to social transformation associated with technological development, urbanization, industrialization, formal education, and increased participation in wider social networks. These processes often influence language behavior by introducing new communicative needs and altering patterns of social interaction.

Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) note that language change is frequently associated with broader social changes. As communities become increasingly connected to national and global institutions, speakers may adopt linguistic forms that facilitate communication beyond their local environments. This tendency often contributes to the growing use of national or international languages at the expense of local linguistic varieties.

The relationship between modernization and language use has been widely documented. Trudgill (2000) argues that social mobility and contact between speech communities often accelerate linguistic change. Similarly, Crystal (2000) observes that globalization and technological advancement have intensified pressure on minority and regional languages worldwide.

Modernization does not necessarily eliminate local languages; however, it may alter the domains in which they are used. Traditional vocabulary associated with agriculture, indigenous architecture, customary institutions, and local ecological knowledge may become less relevant as lifestyles and occupations change. Consequently, lexical items that once played important roles in daily communication may gradually disappear from common usage.

2.3 Lexical Change and Vocabulary Shift

Vocabulary is one of the most dynamic components of language. Lexical change occurs when words are introduced, modified, replaced, or abandoned as a result of social and cultural developments. According to Aitchison (2013), vocabulary continuously evolves because speakers adapt language to meet changing communicative needs.

Lexical change may occur through borrowing, semantic shift, word formation, or lexical replacement. In multilingual societies, lexical replacement frequently happens when speakers adopt words from a more dominant language while reducing the use of traditional vocabulary. Such changes often reflect shifts in cultural practices, technological innovation, and social identity.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, vocabulary is closely connected to cultural knowledge. Many traditional lexical items encode information about local customs, beliefs, occupations, and environmental conditions. Therefore, the decline of traditional vocabulary may indicate broader cultural transformations within a community.

In the Batak Toba context, words such as huta, sopo, and parmahan carry cultural meanings that extend beyond their literal definitions. Their decreasing use may reflect changing social realities as traditional lifestyles become increasingly influenced by modernization and national cultural integration.

2.5 Language Maintenance and Cultural Identity

Language maintenance refers to efforts by individuals or communities to preserve and continue using a language despite external pressures favoring another language. Fishman (1991) argues that language maintenance depends largely on community commitment and successful intergenerational transmission.

Language plays an important role in the construction and preservation of cultural identity. According to Edwards (2009), language functions as a symbol of group membership and collective heritage. Through language, communities maintain historical continuity and express cultural distinctiveness. The preservation of traditional vocabulary is particularly important because lexical items often represent cultural concepts that may not have exact equivalents in other languages. When traditional words disappear, aspects of cultural knowledge may also become less accessible to future generations. Therefore, documenting and analyzing lexical change can contribute to broader efforts aimed at safeguarding linguistic and cultural heritage.

2.6 Previous Studies

Numerous studies have investigated language shift and language maintenance in multilingual communities. Fishman (1991) established a foundational framework for understanding how language shift develops across generations and how communities respond to linguistic change. Subsequent research has demonstrated that factors such as education, migration, urbanization, and socioeconomic development significantly influence language use and language choice.

In Indonesia, several studies have reported declining use of regional languages among younger speakers due to increasing exposure to Indonesian through education, media, and technology. These studies generally conclude that language shift is most evident in informal communication, lexical choice, and intergenerational language transmission.

Research on lexical change has similarly shown that traditional vocabulary is often among the first linguistic elements affected by modernization. As new concepts, technologies, and social practices emerge, speakers tend to adopt more widely recognized lexical forms while abandoning less frequently used traditional terms. Such findings suggest that vocabulary provides valuable evidence for examining broader processes of language shift.

Although previous studies have explored language shift in various Indonesian linguistic communities, limited attention has been given to the impact of modernization on traditional Batak Toba vocabulary. Most existing research focuses on language attitudes, bilingualism, or language maintenance, while lexical-level changes remain relatively underexamined. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how modernization influences the use of traditional Batak Toba lexical items and by identifying patterns of vocabulary shift within contemporary Batak Toba society.

Recent sociolinguistic research has emphasized that language shift has become increasingly prevalent among minority and indigenous language communities due to modernization, globalization, urbanization, and digital communication. Schmid (2011) argues that lexical attrition is often one of the earliest manifestations of language shift because vocabulary is highly sensitive to changes in language use and social interaction. Similarly, Grenoble and Whaley (2021) note that traditional vocabulary tends to disappear more rapidly when younger generations experience greater exposure to dominant national or global languages.

In the Indonesian context, several recent studies have reported similar trends among regional languages. Younger speakers increasingly replace traditional lexical items with Indonesian equivalents in educational, technological, and professional settings. Such linguistic changes reflect broader sociocultural transformations and may eventually contribute to language endangerment if intergenerational transmission weakens.

Furthermore, language maintenance scholars emphasize that preserving traditional vocabulary is essential for maintaining cultural identity and indigenous knowledge systems. As Fishman (1991) maintains, language preservation depends largely on the successful transmission of linguistic practices across generations. Therefore, documenting traditional Batak Toba vocabulary is not only a linguistic endeavor but also an effort to safeguard cultural heritage in the face of modernization.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design within a sociolinguistic framework. The study focused on examining the impact of modernization on traditional Batak Toba vocabulary and identifying patterns of language shift reflected in lexical changes. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore and interpret linguistic phenomena within their social and cultural contexts rather than measure variables quantitatively.

The research specifically adopted document analysis as its primary method of inquiry. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents to obtain meaningful information relevant to a research objective. Through document analysis, the researcher examined traditional Batak Toba lexical items and their modern equivalents to identify evidence of language shift resulting from sociocultural change and modernization.

The study was guided by Fishman's (1991) theory of language shift and sociolinguistic perspectives proposed by Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021), which emphasize the relationship between language use, social transformation, and cultural change.

3.2 Participants

Since this study did not involve human participants directly, the primary data source consisted of documented lexical items collected from Batak Toba language materials. The data were obtained from linguistic documents containing traditional Batak Toba vocabulary and their contemporary equivalents used in present-day communication.

The unit of analysis was individual lexical items that demonstrated shifts in usage due to modernization. Examples included traditional words such as huta (village), sopo (hut or traditional shelter), parmahan (cultivated field), dolok (mountain), bah (river), and tano (land), which are increasingly replaced by Indonesian lexical equivalents in contemporary communication.

Purposive sampling was employed to select lexical items that met the following criteria:

a. The word represented traditional Batak Toba vocabulary.
b. The word had a contemporary Indonesian equivalent frequently used by younger speakers.
c. The lexical item reflected sociocultural or environmental concepts relevant to Batak Toba society.

Evidence of reduced usage could be identified through comparison with contemporary language practices. A total of twenty traditional lexical items were selected as the primary data for analysis.

3.3 Instruments

The primary research instrument was a document analysis checklist developed based on theories of language shift and lexical change. The checklist was designed to categorize and evaluate lexical items according to their current usage and degree of replacement by modern equivalents.
The instrument consisted of four analytical categories:

a. Traditional Batak Toba lexical item.
b. Modern equivalent used in contemporary communication.
c. Semantic meaning of the lexical item.
d. Evidence of language shift and sociocultural factors influencing the change.

In addition, a data classification table was employed to organize the lexical items systematically. The table enabled the researcher to compare traditional vocabulary with modern alternatives and identify patterns of lexical replacement associated with modernization. To ensure analytical consistency, each lexical item was examined repeatedly and categorized according to its linguistic function, cultural significance, and level of usage in contemporary society.

3.4 Data Source

The lexical data analyzed in this study were obtained from Batak Toba dictionaries, traditional literature, cultural documents, and previous linguistic studies focusing on Batak Toba vocabulary. To ensure the relevance of the data, lexical items were selected based on three criteria: (1) the lexical item represented a traditional Batak Toba concept, object, place, or cultural practice; (2) the item had a contemporary Indonesian equivalent commonly used in present-day communication; and (3) previous sources indicated that the traditional term had experienced a decline in usage among younger generations.

A total of twenty lexical items were selected to represent different semantic domains, including family relationships, traditional housing, agriculture, geography, customary institutions, and cultural practices. This broader dataset enabled a more comprehensive examination of lexical change associated with modernization.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analytical procedures followed several stages adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.

In the first stage, the researcher identified and selected lexical items that reflected language shift phenomena. Traditional Batak Toba vocabulary and its modern equivalents were compiled and organized into analytical categories.

In the second stage, the data were displayed in tables to facilitate comparison between traditional and modern lexical forms. The researcher examined patterns of lexical replacement and identified sociocultural factors contributing to vocabulary change. In the third stage, the findings were interpreted using Fishman's (1991) theory of language shift and supporting sociolinguistic theories. The analysis focused on how modernization, education, social mobility, and increased use of Indonesian influenced the declining use of traditional Batak Toba vocabulary. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on recurring patterns identified throughout the analysis. These conclusions were used to explain the relationship between modernization and lexical language shift within the Batak Toba speech community.

The study employed qualitative content analysis to examine patterns of lexical attrition and language shift. The selected lexical items were first identified and categorized according to their semantic domains. Subsequently, traditional lexical forms were compared with their contemporary Indonesian equivalents to identify patterns of lexical replacement.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the coding process was conducted twice with a two-week interval between coding sessions. Any inconsistencies identified during the second coding process were reviewed and resolved through repeated examination of the documentary sources. Furthermore, source triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from dictionaries, cultural publications, and previous studies. These procedures helped ensure the trustworthiness and consistency of the findings.

4. RESULTS

This study examined the impact of modernization on traditional Batak Toba vocabulary by analyzing lexical items that have declined in use and been replaced by contemporary Indonesian equivalents. The findings reveal that modernization has contributed to significant lexical changes within the Batak Toba speech community.

4.1 Traditional Batak Toba Vocabulary and Modern Equivalents

The first objective of the study was to identify traditional Batak Toba lexical items that have undergone language shift. Table 1 presents the traditional vocabulary and its contemporary equivalents commonly used in present-day communication.

Table 1. Traditional Batak Toba Vocabulary and Contemporary Equivalents

No	Traditional Lexicon	Contemporary Equivalent	Meaning
1	*Huta*	*Desa*	Village
2	*Sopo*	*Gubuk*	Hut/Shelter
3	*Parmahan*	*Ladang*	Cultivated field
4	*Dolok*	*Gunung*	Mountain
5	*Bah*	*Sungai*	River
6	*Tano*	*Tanah*	Land
7	*Dalan*	*Jalan*	Road
8	*Aek*	*Air*	Water
9	*Jabu*	*Rumah*	House
10	*Harangan*	*Hutan*	Forest
11	*Saba*	*Sawah*	Rice field
12	*Bona*	*Asal-usul*	Origin
13	*Dongan*	*Teman*	Friend
14	*Ompu*	*Kakek/Nenek*	Grandparent
15	*Boru*	*Perempuan*	Daughter/Woman
16	*Parhobas*	*Pekerja adat*	Traditional assistant
17	*Horja*	*Pesta adat*	Traditional ceremony
18	*Hoda*	*Kuda*	Horse
19	*Pamatang*	*Bukit*	Hill

20	*Togu*	*Penjaga*	Guardian

The findings reveal varying levels of lexical maintenance among the traditional Batak Toba vocabulary. Lexical items closely associated with customary institutions and cultural ceremonies, such as Horja, Dalihan Na Tolu, and Mangulosi, remain relatively well preserved. In contrast, vocabulary related to traditional settlement patterns, agricultural practices, and geographical features demonstrates lower levels of usage among younger generations.

The results suggest that modernization affects semantic domains differently. Terms closely connected to cultural identity tend to be maintained, whereas vocabulary associated with traditional lifestyles is more vulnerable to lexical replacement. This pattern supports previous sociolinguistic studies indicating that cultural significance plays a crucial role in language maintenance and lexical preservation.

4.2 Categories of Lexical Shift

To better understand the nature of lexical change, the vocabulary items were classified into semantic categories.

Table 2. Categories of Lexical Shift

No	Category	Number of Lexical Items	Percentage (%)
1	Geography and Environment	7	35
2	Settlement and Infrastructure	4	20
3	Agriculture and Livelihood	3	15
4	Social Relationships	4	20
5	Traditional Culture and Customs	2	10
	Total	20	100

As shown in Table 2, the largest proportion of lexical shift occurred in geography and environmental terminology (35%), followed by settlement and social relationship vocabulary (20% each). Traditional terms related to customary practices and cultural institutions represented the smallest category (10%), suggesting that some culturally significant vocabulary continues to be preserved within ceremonial contexts.

4.3 Patterns of Lexical Replacement

Analysis of the data revealed three major patterns of lexical replacement. The most common pattern was direct lexical replacement, where traditional Batak Toba words were substituted by Indonesian vocabulary in daily communication. This pattern was observed in geographical, environmental, and residential terminology.

Functional reduction was identified in lexical items that remain known but are no longer frequently used. Such vocabulary survives primarily among older speakers or in discussions related to traditional occupations and lifestyles.

Table 3. Patterns of Lexical Shift

No	Pattern	Description	Examples
1	Direct Lexical Replacement	Traditional words replaced by Indonesian equivalents	*huta → desa, dolok → gunung*
2	Functional Reduction	Traditional words are used only in limited contexts	*sopo, parmahan*
3	Cultural Retention	Traditional words are maintained in customary activities	*horja, parhobas*

Meanwhile, cultural retention was observed in words closely associated with Batak customs and traditional ceremonies. These lexical items continue to be used because they represent culturally specific concepts that have no exact equivalent in Indonesian.

4.4 Indicators of Language Shift

The findings suggest several indicators of language shift within the Batak Toba speech community.

Table 4. Indicators of Language Shift

No	Pattern	Description
1	Reduced frequency of traditional vocabulary	Traditional words are rarely used in everyday conversation
2	Increased use of Indonesian equivalents	Indonesian lexical items dominate daily communication
3	Generational differences	Younger speakers prefer modern vocabulary
4	Domain restriction	Traditional words are mainly used in cultural contexts

Among these indicators, the most visible phenomenon was the increasing preference for Indonesian lexical forms. Traditional vocabulary was found to be more common among older generations, while younger speakers tended to employ Indonesian equivalents in both formal and informal communication.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The results demonstrate that modernization has significantly influenced vocabulary use within the Batak Toba speech community. Traditional lexical items associated with geography, settlement, agriculture, and daily life are increasingly replaced by Indonesian equivalents. Although some vocabulary continues to survive in cultural and ceremonial contexts, many traditional words show clear signs of reduced usage. The findings indicate that lexical replacement constitutes an important manifestation of language shift and reflects broader sociocultural changes occurring in contemporary Batak Toba society.

4.6 imitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses primarily on lexical change and does not examine phonological, grammatical, or discourse-level aspects of language shift. Second, the findings are based on documentary sources and therefore may not fully represent actual language use in natural communication settings. Third, the study concentrates on selected lexical items and does not encompass the entire Batak Toba lexicon. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate field observations, interviews, and larger lexical datasets to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of language shift within the Batak Toba community.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that modernization has significantly influenced the use of traditional Batak Toba vocabulary. The replacement of traditional lexical items with Indonesian equivalents demonstrates an ongoing process of language shift at the lexical level. Although the Batak Toba language continues to be used within the community, the decreasing use of traditional vocabulary suggests that certain linguistic and cultural elements are becoming less prominent in everyday communication.

One of the most notable findings is the widespread replacement of traditional Batak Toba lexical items by Indonesian vocabulary. Words such as huta, dolok, aek, and jabu are increasingly replaced by desa, gunung, air, and rumah. This phenomenon reflects what Fishman (1991) describes as language shift, a process in which speakers gradually reduce their use of traditional linguistic forms and adopt those of a more dominant language. Although the Batak Toba language itself has not disappeared, the lexical changes identified in this study indicate that Indonesian has become increasingly influential in shaping language practices among Batak Toba speakers.

The findings support Holmes' (2013) argument that language shift commonly occurs when speakers perceive another language as offering greater social, educational, and communicative advantages. In contemporary Indonesian society, Indonesian functions as the national language and serves as the primary medium of education, government administration, mass media, and digital communication. Consequently, younger generations encounter Indonesian more frequently than traditional Batak Toba vocabulary in their daily lives. This increased exposure encourages the adoption of Indonesian lexical forms and reduces opportunities for the transmission of traditional vocabulary across generations.

The predominance of lexical replacement in categories related to geography, settlement, and everyday life also reflects the influence of modernization on language use. Terms such as huta and sopo originated in social contexts where traditional village structures and indigenous architectural forms played central roles in community life. As modernization transforms physical environments and social practices, many traditional concepts become less relevant in everyday communication. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) note that language change often accompanies broader social transformation because linguistic forms adapt to changing communicative needs. The present findings support this perspective, as lexical replacement appears closely associated with shifts in lifestyle, education, and patterns of social interaction.

Another important finding concerns the functional reduction of certain traditional lexical items. Words such as parmahan and sopo remain familiar to some community members but are used less frequently than in previous generations. This pattern suggests that language shift does not occur abruptly but rather develops gradually over time. Aitchison (2013) explains that lexical change is a continuous process through which languages adapt to social and cultural developments. In many cases, older words do not disappear immediately; instead, their functions become increasingly restricted until they are eventually replaced by alternative forms. The Batak Toba vocabulary examined in this study appears to be undergoing a similar process.

Despite the evidence of language shift, the findings also reveal the persistence of certain traditional lexical items, particularly those associated with customary institutions and cultural practices. Words such as horja and parhobas continue to be used because they represent culturally specific concepts that cannot be fully replaced by Indonesian equivalents. This finding demonstrates that language maintenance and language shift can occur simultaneously within a speech community. Fishman (1991) argues that linguistic survival is often strongest in domains closely connected to cultural identity and community traditions. The continued use of culturally significant vocabulary in Batak ceremonial contexts supports this observation.

The findings further highlight the relationship between language and cultural identity. Traditional vocabulary often carries meanings that extend beyond simple lexical reference. Many Batak Toba words embody local knowledge, historical experiences, social values, and cultural practices that have been transmitted across generations. Consequently, the decline of traditional vocabulary may affect not only linguistic diversity but also cultural continuity. Crystal (2000) emphasizes that language represents a unique way of understanding and interpreting the world. Therefore, the disappearance of traditional lexical items may result in the gradual loss of cultural concepts embedded within those words.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the generational differences observed in the findings represent a critical indicator of language shift. Older speakers tend to maintain traditional vocabulary because they acquired it within traditional social environments, whereas younger speakers are more likely to favor Indonesian lexical forms due to formal education, digital communication, and increased interaction with broader social networks. Similar patterns have been reported in studies of minority and regional languages worldwide, where younger generations often become the primary agents of linguistic change.

The findings of this study also suggest that modernization should not necessarily be viewed as a direct threat to local languages. Rather, modernization creates new communicative conditions that influence language choices and linguistic behavior. The challenge lies in balancing modernization with efforts to preserve linguistic and cultural heritage. Documentation, educational programs, and the integration of local languages into cultural activities may help maintain traditional vocabulary while allowing communities to participate fully in contemporary society.

Overall, the study demonstrates that modernization has contributed to language shift within the Batak Toba speech community through the gradual replacement and reduced use of traditional vocabulary. While some culturally significant lexical items continue to survive in ceremonial and customary domains, many traditional words associated with everyday life are increasingly being replaced by Indonesian equivalents. These findings reinforce sociolinguistic theories suggesting that language change is closely connected to social transformation and highlight the importance of preserving traditional vocabulary as part of broader efforts to maintain cultural identity and linguistic diversity.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of modernization on traditional Batak Toba vocabulary through a sociolinguistic analysis of language shift. The findings revealed that modernization has contributed to noticeable changes in the lexical practices of the Batak Toba speech community. A number of traditional lexical items that were once commonly used in daily communication are increasingly being replaced by Indonesian equivalents, particularly in domains related to settlement, geography, agriculture, and everyday life. These changes indicate that language shift is occurring at the lexical level as speakers adapt their language use to contemporary social and communicative environments.

The study further found that modernization, formal education, technological development, and increased exposure to Indonesian have influenced vocabulary choices among Batak Toba speakers.

Younger generations tend to use Indonesian lexical forms more frequently, while traditional vocabulary is more commonly maintained by older speakers and within culturally specific contexts. This pattern supports sociolinguistic perspectives, suggesting that language change is closely associated with social transformation and shifting communicative needs. Despite the ongoing process of lexical replacement, the findings also demonstrate that some traditional Batak Toba vocabulary continues to survive, particularly terms associated with customary institutions, traditional ceremonies, and cultural identity. These lexical items remain important symbols of Batak heritage and serve as linguistic representations of local knowledge and cultural values. Their continued use suggests that language maintenance and language shift may occur simultaneously within the same speech community.

The study contributes to the field of sociolinguistics by providing evidence that modernization influences language use not only through changes in language choice but also through gradual transformations in vocabulary. The findings highlight the importance of documenting and preserving traditional lexical items as part of broader efforts to maintain linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Preserving traditional vocabulary is essential because language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a repository of collective memory, cultural identity, and indigenous knowledge.

However, this study is limited by its focus on a relatively small set of lexical items and its reliance on document-based data. Future research may involve larger datasets, direct observation, interviews, or surveys with speakers from different generations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of language shift within Batak Toba communities. Further studies may also compare language shift phenomena across different Batak subgroups or other regional languages in Indonesia to explore broader patterns of linguistic change in multilingual societies.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that modernization has played a significant role in reshaping traditional Batak Toba vocabulary. While language change is a natural consequence of social development, efforts to preserve traditional lexical items remain essential for sustaining cultural identity and ensuring the continuity of Batak Toba linguistic heritage for future generations.

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