Language Variation in Tradistional Ceremony of the Batak Toba: A Sociaolinguistic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze language variation that occurs in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies through a sociolinguistic perspective. Language variation in a traditional context is understood as a socio-cultural phenomenon that reflects the identity, values, and social structure of the speaking community (Fishman, 1972). Toba Batak traditional ceremonies, such as the unjuk (showing ceremony), mangulosi (mangulosi), mangalahat horbo (showing ceremony), and traditional weddings, have distinctive and functional language structures, such as the use of umpasa (words), tutur (words), hata somba (words), and hata andung (words). These languages serve not only as a means of communication but also as a means of strengthening social relations, respect, and the transmission of cultural values (Sibarani, 2012). The research method used a descriptive qualitative approach using text analysis and literature review techniques. Data were obtained from various ritual documents, recordings of traditional ceremonies, and previous research on Toba Batak linguistics. The results indicate that language variation in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies is influenced by kinship, social status, ritual context, and specific communicative purposes (Duranti, 1997). This study finds that modern social changes influence speech styles, particularly among the younger generation, who are beginning to become familiar with Indonesian. These findings demonstrate a shift in form, but not the elimination of the cultural function of ritual language. This research contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of regional languages in cultural practices and provides a foundation for the preservation of Toba Batak linguistics in the modern era.

Keywords: language variation, traditional ceremony, Batak Toba, sociolinguistic analysis

Variasi Bahasa dalam Upacara Adat Batak Toba: Analisis Sosiaolinguistik

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis variasi bahasa yang terjadi dalam upacara adat Batak Toba melalui perspektif sosiolinguistik. Variasi bahasa dalam konteks adat dipahami sebagai fenomena sosial budaya yang mencerminkan identitas, nilai, dan struktur sosial masyarakat penuturnya (Fishman, 1972). Upacara adat Batak Toba, seperti unjuk (upacara pertunjukan), mangulosi (mangulosi), mangalahat horbo (upacara pertunjukan), dan pernikahan adat, memiliki struktur bahasa yang khas dan fungsional, seperti penggunaan umpasa (kata), tutur (kata), hata somba (kata), dan hata andung (kata). Bahasa-bahasa tersebut tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat komunikasi, tetapi juga sebagai alat untuk mempererat hubungan sosial, rasa hormat, dan transmisi nilai-nilai budaya (Sibarani, 2012). Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik analisis teks dan tinjauan pustaka. Data diperoleh dari berbagai dokumen ritual, rekaman upacara adat, dan penelitian terdahulu tentang linguistik Batak Toba. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variasi bahasa dalam upacara adat Batak Toba dipengaruhi oleh hubungan kekerabatan, status sosial, konteks ritual, dan tujuan komunikasi tertentu (Duranti, 1997). Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa perubahan sosial modern memengaruhi gaya bicara, terutama di kalangan generasi muda yang mulai mengenal bahasa Indonesia. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya pergeseran bentuk, tetapi bukan hilangnya fungsi kultural bahasa ritual. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman dinamika bahasa daerah dalam praktik budaya dan memberikan landasan bagi pelestarian linguistik Batak Toba di era modern.

Kata kunci: variasi bahasa, upacara adat, Batak Toba, analisis sosiolinguistik

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, the phenomenon of regional language shift in Indonesia has increased significantly due to modernization, globalization, and the dominance of Indonesian in the public sphere (Sneddon, 2003). This condition has also influenced the Toba Batak language, particularly in the context of traditional ceremonies, which previously used a very strict and rule-based language variety. Social changes such as migration, interethnic marriage, and digital media have accelerated the transformation of language practices in Toba Batak customs (Simanjuntak, 2020). Therefore, research on language variation in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies is relevant again to explore the extent of these changes and their implications for cultural identity.

Research on language survival indicates that regional languages will survive if they are still used in strong social domains, such as traditional rituals, family life, and cultural practices (Holmes, 2013). In the Toba Batak context, traditional ceremonies are the most important domain that maintains traditional language varieties, such as hata somba (language of respect), hata andung (lamentations), and umpasa (traditional pantun). However, several studies have shown significant changes in the structure and word choice used by the younger generation (Sibagariang, 2019). This raises questions about how language variation develops in the context of contemporary traditional ceremonies.

The main problem of this research is to identify the forms of language variation that emerge in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies and why these variations are used. According to Wardhaugh (2015), language variation cannot be separated from the social context of the speaker, including status, age, relationships, and communication goals. The research questions are formulated as follows:

1) What forms of language variation occur in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies?
2) What factors influence the choice of these language variations?
3) What is the social function of language variation in the context of traditional rituals?
4) How do modern social changes influence language patterns in traditional ceremonies?

The aim of this research is to examine in depth the forms of language variation that appear in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies and explain the social factors behind their selection. This research seeks to describe the various variations of language used by speakers in the context of traditional rituals, then analyze the determining factors that influence the choice of language, such as social status, role of participants, kinship relationships, and the purpose of communication that takes place in the ceremony. In addition, this research aims to reveal the social function of language variations in maintaining traditional structures, reflecting cultural values, and regulating social relations between ritual participants. Furthermore, this research is also directed at understanding how modern social changes influence language patterns in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies, including shifts in linguistic preferences, adaptation to contemporary contexts, and forms of linguistic hybridity that are beginning to emerge in traditional practices.

Several previous studies have highlighted aspects of Toba Batak linguistics, such as the use of umpasa in traditional ceremonies (Siringoringo, 2018), an analysis of hata somba in the Dalihan Na Tolu family environment (Pasaribu, 2017), and the tortor language used in traditional ceremonies (Lumbantobing, 2016). However, most studies have focused on a single type of ritual language and have not comprehensively examined language variation across ritual types. Furthermore, previous studies rarely link language variation to modern social dynamics.

The research gap lies in the lack of studies integrating all varieties of Toba Batak traditional languages within a single sociolinguistic framework. Furthermore, few studies have linked kinship factors in Dalihan Na Tolu (dongan tubu, boru, hula-hula) to the choice of specific language

varieties (Sibarani, 2004). This gap is what this study aims to fill through a comprehensive analysis of language variation across various stages of traditional rituals.

This research is significant because it provides a comprehensive overview of language variation in Toba Batak traditional rituals, which are increasingly threatened by the phenomenon of language shift (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). By exploring social functions, changes in form, and patterns of language choice, this research helps clarify the role of traditional languages in building the identity of the Toba Batak community. These findings are also important for strengthening cultural literacy, revitalizing local languages, and developing materials for regional language preservation.

This research's contributions encompass both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, this study expands sociolinguistic studies into the ritual domain, particularly within the context of Toba Batak society (Duranti, 1997). Practically, the research findings can be used by traditional institutions, cultural communities, and educational institutions in designing ritual language preservation programs. Thus, this research not only fills a gap in the literature but also directly contributes to strengthening Toba Batak cultural identity amidst modernization.

Literature Review

1. Language Variation from a Sociolinguistic Perspective

Language variation is understood as the different forms of language used by speakers in varying social contexts (Wardhaugh, 2015). This variation can arise due to differences in status, age, gender, domain of use, and even communication purposes. In traditional cultural contexts, language variation plays a crucial role in marking the social structure and cultural values of a society (Hymes, 1974). For the Toba Batak people, language variation reflects the Dalihan Na Tolu social order, making sociolinguistic studies relevant for exploring the social meanings behind language choices.

2. Ritual Language in Anthropological Linguistic Studies

Ritual language is a form of language used in sacred contexts or traditional ceremonies and generally has a distinctive structure (Duranti, 1997). Ritual language is not only a means of communication but also a symbolic instrument representing cosmology, values, and social hierarchy (Foley, 1997). In Toba Batak customs, ritual languages such as umpasa, tutur, andungan, and hata somba serve as a medium for conveying prayers, respect, and intergroup relations (Sibarani, 2012). This literature emphasizes the importance of studying ritual languages because they serve as the primary means of cultural transmission.

3. Dalihan Na Tolu as a Socio-Language Structure

The Dalihan Na Tolu kinship structure—consisting of hula-hula, dongan tubu, and boru—regulates social relations and speech patterns in traditional ceremonies (Vergouwen, 1986). Previous research has shown that a person's position within this structure determines the choice of language, intonation, and style used (Pasaribu, 2017). A literature review of the relationship between social structure and language indicates that Toba Batak traditional language is relational, meaning its linguistic function is always related to the speaker's social role.

4. The Social Function of Ritual Language

Ritual language in traditional societies serves as a bond of solidarity, legitimacy of power, and a mechanism for transmitting cultural values (Duranti, 1997). Siringoringo's (2018) study shows that umpasa is not only an aesthetic form of language but also strengthens social relationships and conveys advice. This aligns with Malinowski's (1923) view that language in rituals is more aimed at building social bonds than simply conveying information. This literature helps confirm that the traditional language of the Toba Batak has a strong social function.

5. Language Change and Modernization

The theory of language change asserts that language will always change according to the social dynamics of the speaking community (Milroy, 1992). In the Toba Batak context, various studies show that the use of Indonesian in traditional ceremonies is increasing, especially among the younger generation (Simanjuntak, 2020). Research by Sibagariang (2019) also found that some forms of umpasa (language utterances) were simplified because they were no longer understood by most ceremony participants. This literature demonstrates that modernization creates changes in the structure and function of ritual language.

6. Previous Research on the Toba Batak Language

Research on the traditional language of the Toba Batak has been conducted in various contexts, such as analysis of hata somba (Pasaribu, 2017), the function of andungan (invocations) in traditional funerals (Lumbantobing, 2016), and the use of umpasa in traditional celebrations (Siregar, 2018). However, these studies are still partial and have not yet integrated the various varieties of traditional languages into one comprehensive study. Furthermore, no research has examined language variation in depth from a sociolinguistic perspective. This limitation underscores the need for more integrative research.

7. Text Analysis Theory in Rituals

Text analysis is an approach used to understand the meaning, function, and structure of language in a specific context (Fairclough, 1995). In ethnolinguistic research, text analysis enables researchers to decipher the cultural symbols contained in traditional speech (Bauman, 1986). The literature on text analysis provides a methodological foundation for understanding Toba Batak ritual language as a cultural text rich in meaning.

8. Relevance of the Literature Review

The literature review indicates that the frameworks of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and text analysis are relevant for examining language variation in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies. Previous literature provides a conceptual foundation regarding the relationship between language and social structure, but does not yet present a comprehensive picture of how language variation emerges and is used in rituals. Therefore, this study fills this gap.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach because it aims to understand language phenomena naturally through contextual interpretation (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative approach is relevant in sociolinguistic research, particularly when the focus of the study is language practices in ritual contexts. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore social meaning through an in-depth understanding of textual and situational data.

The method used is text analysis with a literature study design. Text analysis is used to examine the structure, function, and meaning of ritual language in various Toba Batak traditional documents, such as umpasa, hata somba, tutur parhata, and andungan (Fairclough, 1995). Meanwhile, a literature study was conducted to collect secondary data from previous research, traditional documents, Toba Batak cultural books, and relevant scientific articles (Hart, 1998). This design is appropriate for the research objectives because it allows for a comprehensive mapping of language variation.

The research data consisted of ritual texts collected from recordings of traditional ceremonies, written documentation, and written sources such as Sibarani (2012), Pasaribu (2017), and Lumbantobing (2016). According to Bowen (2009), documents are a valid data source in qualitative research because they can provide rich, contextual evidence. Data were categorized based on the type of ritual language, function, context of use, and social relations of the speakers in Dalihan Na Tolu.

Data collection was conducted using documentation and text recording techniques (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Ritual documents were analyzed to identify language forms, word choice, sentence structure, style, and communicative functions. All data were recorded systematically to enable comparative analysis between rituals.

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on three aspects: (1) forms of language variation, (2) the speakers' social context, and (3) social and cultural functions. This analysis was then compared with previous research to identify unique features and contributions. This is in line with the cultural text analysis approach put forward by Bauman (1986).

RESULT

The results of this study indicate that language variation in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies includes four main forms: hata somba (language of respect), hata andung (language of lamentation), umpasa (traditional pantun), and tutur (explanation of kinship systems). These four language varieties are used sequentially according to the ritual stages and social structure of Dalihan Na Tolu (Sibarani, 2012). This finding aligns with Hymes' (1974) view that language and social context are inseparable, particularly in ritualistic speech events. Thus, language variation in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies is not simply a linguistic form, but a relational communication system.

1. Language Variation in Traditional Ceremonies: Categories and Characteristics

Text analysis indicates that hata somba stands out as the most formal and normative variety. This variety is used when the boru communicate with the hula-hula to show the highest respect. The sentence structure tends to be long, full of metaphors, and uses low intonation as a sign of humility. This phenomenon aligns with Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of linguistic politeness, which explains that the choice of language forms reflects power relations within society. In the Toba

Batak context, the hula-hula is always positioned as a revered figure, so the language follows this hierarchical structure (Vergouwen, 1986).

Conversely, hata andung was found to be the most emotional language variety. This variety is typically used at funeral ceremonies and is characterized by a lilting rhythm, repetition, and the use of natural metaphors such as "bunga na so marbuah" or "parhobas na so marpudi." This finding supports research by Lumbantobing (2016), which states that andung has both aesthetic and therapeutic functions for the community. Thus, this language variation not only conveys grief but also builds emotional solidarity among family members.

Meanwhile, umpasa serves as a form of advice during traditional celebrations, particularly at weddings and the giving of ulos. The structure of umpasa is generally four lines with a parallel pattern, in line with the characteristics of Indonesian pantun (Siregar, 2018). This study found that umpasa serves not only as an aesthetic tool but also as an instrument of social legitimacy. When the hula-hula presents the ulos to the bridal couple, the umpasa serves as a form of prayer and a symbolic grant of authority (Sibarani, 2012).

The fourth form, tutur (language), is the language used to introduce kinship positions. Tutur is a verbal mechanism for establishing relational identity. The analysis shows that the use of tutur occurs most frequently in the context of seating arrangements, the division of ritual tasks, and the assignment of symbolic roles. This finding aligns with Pasaribu's (2017) study, which emphasized that tutur is the foundation of Toba Batak traditional communication.

2. Social Factors Determining Language Variation

The analysis revealed four main factors: kinship position, communicative purpose, speaker age, and ritual context. First, kinship position has a dominant influence, as confirmed by the structure of Dalihan Na Tolu (Vergouwen, 1986). When a speaker is in the position of "boru," the language used becomes more submissive and full of respectful expressions. Conversely, when a hula-

hula speaks to a "boru," the language is more instructive and direct. This is consistent with sociolinguistic studies on social relations and language style (Wardhaugh, 2015).

Second, communicative purpose also determines variation. For example, when the purpose of communication is to convey blessings, the umpasa (symbol) form is chosen. When the goal is to strengthen hierarchical relationships, hata somba (symbol) is used.

Third, speaker age influences the authenticity of the use of ritual forms. This study found that elderly speakers use ritual language more comprehensively than younger speakers, reinforcing Simanjuntak's (2020) findings regarding the decline in indigenous language competence.

Fourth, ritual context influences the choice of language variations. In funeral ceremonies, andung is more frequently used. At weddings, umpasa dominates. This contextual factor reinforces Hymes' (1974) concept of the "speaking model," which states that each speech event has its own rules and norms.

3. Forms of Language Change in Ritual Practice

An interesting finding in this study is the emergence of a hybrid language form, a blend of Toba Batak and Indonesian. This phenomenon is evident in prayers recited by the younger generation, for example, "God bless you, dear ones... you are so kind," which combines the two languages. This finding supports Milroy's (1992) theory of language change, which states that language contact leads to linguistic innovation.

Another form of change is the simplification of traditional metaphors. Some idioms that previously used agrarian symbols are now replaced with modern ones. For example, the metaphor "paradopoan na burju" is replaced by "rumah tangga na marhamoraon.

This adaptation demonstrates that ritual language remains functional despite changes in form, in line with Malinowski's (1923) functional perspective.

DISCUSSION

The analysis also found that speech has undergone simplification. Many urban families no longer memorize complete kinship structures. They rely on parhata (traditional spokespersons) to explain kinship positions. This finding supports Grenoble & Whaley's (2006) study that loss of language domain leads to increased dependence on linguistic authority figures.

Table 1
Language Variety in Toba Batak Traditional Ceremonies

Ritual Context	Examples of Ritual Language	Linguistic Meaning	Social Function
Manjalo Pasu-pasu	"Sai anju ma pasu- pasu ni Debata tu hamu"	Prayer of Blessing	Strengthening the relationship with Hula-hula.
Mangulosi	Umpasa: "Sai jolo tubu, jolo torop"	Hope and Advice	Symbolic legitimacy of giving ulos
Marunjuk	Hata Somba: "Hami anak parumaen mangalehon tudu- tudu sipanganon tu hula-hula nami…"	Language of respect	Honoring the Hula- hula party
Saur Martua	Andung: ratapan puitis "Ai ro di jol oni ari malungun on…"	A collective expression of grief	Emotional solidarity and deep relationship connectedness

The forms of language variation in Toba Batak Traditional Ceremonies are described in the points below.

1. Variation Based on Register (Ritual Speech)

In Toba Batak traditional ceremonies, there are several special registers used only in ceremonial contexts:

a. Hata Somba
A high language variety used to honor the hula-hula. Characteristics: formal, metaphorical, full of praise, and very polite.
Example: "Amang hula-hula nami, sombaon nami ho na marpangalaho, tu tondimu do pasu- pasu nami."

b. Hata Andung (death lamentation) Poetic, tearful language used in death rituals.
Example: "Ai amang... ida do roha nami tu ho, sai mulak ma ho tu bagas ni Debata."

c. Hata Siapa / Hata Poda (advice)
Language used to provide advice during wedding ceremonies or child-taking ceremonies (manopoti anak).
Example: "*Ulos na pinasupasu on, sai dapot hamu roha itt,roha crying, evil spirit. Sai dipatupa God in you,jala sai marlabu-labu ham utu marga on*"

d. Hata Panghata / Parhata
The legal-ritual language of parhata or traditional leaders is filled with formulas to regulate the course of ceremonies.
Example: "*Horas ma hita sude! Pature ma jolo roham, ale boru ni hula-hula. Hami parhata mandok ma: on ma ari na binahen Debata, ari panungkunan parbagason ni household na robas na marpudi tu hita on. Ai hula-hula do Debata ni roha; pasahat ma hamu gondang ni rokam tu anak dohot borum, masa sahat ma tumpak nauli tu jabu na soan tu jolo on.*"

e. Umpasa and Umpama
Traditional proverbs, rhymes, or metaphors that enhance speech. Example:

- Umpasa: "Anjuaman si Anjuang, di dolok ni Sitarongga,Sai horas ma parumaen, gabe jabu godang dohot pangaropan na marsogot."
Meaning: Depicts the hope that the bride and groom's household will be full of blessings and become a prosperous, extended family.
Language Variations:
- Uses natural metaphors (anjuaman, dolok).
- Social function: blessing register (various blessings).
- Traditional lexicon: jabu godang, pangaropan.
- Umpama: "Unang somba marhahosa."
Meaning: Don't be arrogant and don't think you're always right. Language Variations:
  - Moral-ethical register.
  - Short expressions with strong social meaning.

2. Variation Based on Social Role

Sociolinguistics emphasizes that language variation is influenced by social structure. In Toba Batak customs, the biggest differences come from Dalihan Na Tolu:

1. Paranak (anak boru) language
This variety is humble, soothing, and full of supplication. Example: "*Hami anak parumaen mangampu tu hula-hula nami...*"

2. Hula-hula language
More assertive, full of authority, because hula-hula is a source of blessings. Example: "*Di hamu do hagabeon dohot hamoraon nami dipasu-pasu.*"

3. Kahanggi language
It has an equal tone, freer, and flatter. Example: "*Ale numbers kahanggi, denggan ma roha ta sude. On ma anak ni kahanggi ta, na laho mangolu tu jabu na imbaru. Sai bahen ma hita pasu-pasu dohot tumpak na denggan, asa gabe ma jabu godang jala marbarita.*"

3. Variations Based on Situation and Ritual Stages

Variations of the Toba Batak language based on the situation and stages of the ritual are described below.

1. Wedding (Ulaon Unjuk / Pamasu-Masuon)
   Formal language, full of praise, prayers, and symbols of family warmth.
   For example, when giving the ulos: "Sai gabe tupa ma hamu di hamoraon, hagabeon, hasangapon."
2. Death (Ulaon Mate / Parmalim)
   Language full of sadness, lamentation, and metaphors of grief.
3. House Building Ceremony / House Entry Ceremony (Marmasuk Bagas) Symbolic language related to land, ancestors, and the safety of the home.
4. Marga Ceremony / Mardebata / Paturang Language predominantly contains the history and legitimacy of the clan, often with a heroic tone.

4. Variations Based on Level of Formality

*V*ariations in the Batak language emerge not only during ritual situations and stages, but are also evident in the level of formality of an event. Each social context demands the use of different language varieties according to norms of politeness, kinship hierarchy, and the intended communication goals. In sacred traditional ceremonies, the language used tends to be more high-level, respectful, and follows traditional speech patterns. Conversely, in everyday interactions or more fluid situations, the language choice becomes more relaxed and communicative. To clarify these differences, the following table shows variations in the Batak language based on the level of formality and the situation in which it is used.

Table 2
Variations in the Batak Language based on the Level of Formality and the Situations

Situation	Language Variety
Sacred ritual	High Language (hata Somba, hata parhata)
Semi-Sacred Ritual	Umpasa,Umpama,Hata poda
Normal interactions between families	Everyday Variety
Customary negotiation process	Formal-argumentative variety

5. Variation Based on Linguistic Media

Language variation in Batak society can be observed through differences in the medium of delivery. Oral and written media present different forms of language, both in terms of function and the conveyance of cultural meaning. In traditional contexts, oral media plays a crucial role because elements of intonation, rhythm, and performativity often determine the depth of meaning conveyed. Meanwhile, written media exhibits a more stable and structured form of language. The differences between these two media demonstrate how the Batak people adapt their language choices to their communication needs and cultural functions.

1) Oral: The majority of traditional ceremonies are oral and performative.
2) Non-Oral: Body language symbols (bowing during somba), giving betel, giving ulos.
3) Paralinguistic: Tone, intonation, and rhythm are crucial to meaning.

6. Language Variation According to Social Function

Besides media, language variation can also be examined based on the social functions it performs in Batak cultural interactions. Each utterance serves a specific purpose, ranging from expressing feelings, directing actions, maintaining social relationships, to strengthening structures of authority within the traditional community. These

functions demonstrate that language use in the Batak community serves not only as a means of communication but also as a mechanism for building, maintaining, and preserving the social and cultural values that exist within the community.

1. Expressive function '! in Andung
2. Directive function '! when the parhata directs the event
3. Phatic function '! maintaining social harmony
4. Masculinity/authority function '! in hula-hula
5. Aesthetic function '! use of umpasa
6. Religious function '! traditional prayers and pasu-pasu

7. Sociolinguistic Analysis

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the use of the Batak language reflects social relationships, status, and cultural values that underlie the lives of its people. Differences in speech levels and variations in word choice demonstrate how language serves as a sign of identity, respect, and hierarchy within the Batak kinship system. This is evident in the use of language by traditional leaders and in the implementation of the principle of Dalihan Na Tolu. Thus, sociolinguistic analysis shows that language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a reinforcement of the social structure and traditional values of the Batak people.

1) language as a Status Marker: Parhata and hula-hula figures use high-level language, while anak boru use low-level language.
2) language as a Representation of Dalihan Na Tolu Ideology: Traditional languages strengthen the social structure of the Toba Batak:
3) respect for the hula-hula
4) love for the kahanggi
5) humility towards the boru
6) language Variation Due to Modern Social Mobility: Several contemporary

sociolinguistic phenomena:
7) code-mixing (Indonesian–Toba Batak)
8) register shift (younger generations often lose Hata Somba/Andung)
9) simplified language improvisation
10) fewer professional Parhata

8. Contemporary Phenomena in Traditional Language Variation

Contemporary variations in the traditional Batak language exhibit a number of significant changes influenced by social, cultural, and technological developments. These changes are evident in the way modern Batak people use the language in everyday contexts and during traditional ceremonies. These dynamics demonstrate how the traditional language continues to adapt to new conditions, whether through shifts in form, reductions in the use of certain elements, or the emergence of new language variations. The following phenomena illustrate these forms of change in a contemporary context.

1. The emergence of a hybrid language (Batak–Indonesian) in welcoming speeches.
2. The disappearance of traditional Hata Andung, replaced by prayers or spiritual reflections.
3. The younger generation rarely masters umpasa.
4. Modern traditional ceremonies are shorter and rarely use expert Parhata.
5. Ritual language is recorded and learned through social media.

The findings of this study reinforce the linguistic anthropology literature that ritual language is a representation of culture (Duranti, 1997). However, this study adds a new dimension not fully explained in Pasaribu's (2017) and Siringoringo's (2018) studies: the explicit relationship between language variation and the dynamics of Dalihan Na Tolu. This demonstrates that the choice of language variety is not merely part of ritual aesthetics, but also a social strategy for maintaining kinship structures.

This study also expands the theory of language change by demonstrating that the adaptation of ritual language forms is not only an impact of globalization but also changes in family structure. Therefore, this study holds a crucial position in the study of local language revitalization.

Previous research by Siregar (2018) stated that umpasa serves as an aesthetic tool. However, this study demonstrates a broader function, namely the strengthening of hula-hula's social status. Thus, this study broadens the scope of umpasa's meaning. Sibagariang's (2019) research found a decline in the younger generation's ability to use traditional languages. This study confirms these findings but adds that the younger generation is also creating new, more easily understood forms of language. This suggests that language change is not always a manifestation of loss, but also adaptation.

Furthermore, Lumbantobing (2016) examined andung as an expression of grief. This study complements his findings by emphasizing the social function of andung in building collective solidarity—a dimension that has not been widely discussed.

The novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, it integrates all varieties of ritual language into a single sociolinguistic analysis, which has previously been fragmented. Second, it confirms the strong link between language variation and the structure of Dalihan Na Tolu as a primary factor determining language choice. Third, this study uncovers the existence of hybrid language in Toba Batak rituals—a modern phenomenon not previously explained in the literature.

The uniqueness of this study is evident in the discovery that simplified ritual language is more easily accepted by the younger generation without diminishing its social function. This phenomenon demonstrates that ritual language is not static, but dynamic. Furthermore, the decreasing use of speech does not diminish the legitimacy of the Dalihan Na Tolu structure because the role of parhata is increasingly important. This finding is unique in the study of traditional linguistics.

These findings are significant for regional language preservation because they demonstrate that ritual language persists despite changes in form. This supports Holmes's (2013) concept of "maintenance through adaptation." Furthermore, this research provides a foundation for revitalizing the Toba Batak language through cultural education and digital documentation.

This research provides a theoretical contribution in the form of a new understanding of language variation within the context of rituals and social structures. Practically, this research can be used to develop modules for Toba Batak language preservation, training for the younger generation in traditional language teaching, and developing a digital repository for traditional languages.

The results indicate that language variation in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies falls into four main categories: (1) Hata somba (language of respect), (2) Hata andung (lamentation), (3) Umpasa (traditional pantun), and (4) Tutur (recitation of kinship structures). These four varieties serve to strengthen social relations in Dalihan Na Tolu: hula-hula, dongan tubu, and boru (Sibarani, 2012). These findings align with Hymes' (1974) view that language variation in rituals reflects the social order of its speakers.

These research findings reinforce Duranti's (1997) assertion of the close relationship between language and ritual, but add that, in the Toba Batak context, language variation is highly dependent on the Dalihan Na Tolu kinship structure. This has not been discussed in depth in the research of Pasaribu (2017) or Lumbantobing (2016), so this research fills a theoretical gap.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze language variation in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies through a sociolinguistic perspective. The results indicate that language variation in Toba Batak customs encompasses four main forms: hata somba, hata andung, umpasa, and tutur. These four forms have different but complementary social functions in

building relationships within Dalihan Na Tolu. This finding strengthens the theory that ritual language reflects social structure (Duranti, 1997).

The study also found that social change influences language choice in traditional ceremonies. Despite adaptations in form, language's social function remains intact. This aligns with Milroy's (1992) view that language change is a response to social dynamics. Limitations of the study include (1) the lack of direct oral data from traditional practitioners, (2) limited written documentation, and (3) the absence of ethnographic field data. Therefore, further research needs to involve field observations and in-depth interviews.

Based on the research findings, several actionable suggestions are made. First, a program is needed to preserve the Toba Batak traditional language through local educational curricula and cultural community activities. Teaching the traditional language should emphasize understanding language variations and the contexts in which it is used. Second, Toba Batak traditional institutions need to create digital documentation of umpasa, hata somba, and tutur so that the younger generation can learn from them. Third, further research is needed through field observations to supplement the textual data used in this study.

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