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Mandailing Language Change among the Younger Generation: A Study of Linguistic Factors and Intergenerational Communication Gaps

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the Mandailing language is changing among the younger generation, the linguistic factors that drive these changes, and their consequences for intergenerational communication. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study was conducted in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu Village, Siabu District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra, with informants from the younger (17–25 years) and older (45–70 years) generations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, questionnaires, and document analysis, and were triangulated across sources. The findings show that change is most visible in vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure: traditional words, greetings, and customary expressions are being replaced by Indonesian or mixed Mandailing–Indonesian forms; pronunciation increasingly follows Indonesian sound patterns; complex Mandailing sentences are simplified along Indonesian syntactic patterns; and code-mixing is frequent. Mandailing is increasingly confined to family, customary, and intergenerational domains, whereas Indonesian dominates education, social media, and peer interaction. Five interrelated factors drive these changes: education, media and technology, urbanization, internal simplification of the language, and the social prestige of Indonesian. These shifts create intergenerational communication gaps, as

younger speakers no longer understand many traditional terms, weakening emotional closeness and cultural transmission and underscoring the need for family- and community-based preservation efforts.
Keywords: intergenerational communication, language change, linguistic factors, Mandailing language, younger generation

Introduction

A. Background of Study

Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as an essential marker of cultural identity and social belonging. In multilingual nations such as Indonesia, local languages embody unique worldviews, traditions, and values that shape the collective identity of each ethnic group. However, as national and global communication becomes increasingly dominated by Bahasa Indonesia and English, local languages face a growing threat of decline, particularly among the younger generation. According to Sari (2020), the diminishing use of heritage languages among bilingual ethnic communities in Indonesia indicates a broader phenomenon of language shift, where the dominance of the national language gradually erodes intergenerational transmission of local linguistic heritage.

Sari (2020) emphasizes that the mastery of ethnic vocabulary and daily use of the mother tongue play a vital role in maintaining sociocultural adjustment and ethnic identity among youth. When these linguistic elements weaken, younger speakers tend to experience cultural detachment, resulting in decreased pride and belonging to their ethnic roots. The study further explains that factors such as education systems, media influence, and family language choices significantly contribute to this shift. In many cases, parents consciously prioritize Bahasa Indonesia for the sake of practicality and academic success, unintentionally accelerating the loss of ethnic languages at home.

Drawing from this framework, the Mandailing language once a strong symbol of cultural identity in North Sumatra now faces a similar pattern of decline. The younger generation increasingly uses Bahasa Indonesia or English in daily interactions, leading to a gradual erosion of traditional expressions and oral heritage.

Therefore, understanding the causes and patterns of this linguistic transformation becomes crucial to designing strategies that can preserve the Mandailing language as both a cultural asset and a living medium of identity.In Indonesia, language shift and language change among ethnic groups are common phenomena, particularly in multilingual societies where national and regional languages coexist.

In their study, Pramuniati et al. (2023) investigate the phenomenon of intergenerational language shift in North Sumatra, focusing on families from regional ethnic backgrounds such as Mandailing, Batak Toba, and Karo. The research reveals that many parents who are still fluent in their ethnic languages intentionally choose to use Indonesian in daily communication with their children. This shift is largely driven by practical and socio-economic motivations, including the demands of formal education, ease of communication across ethnic groups, and the perception that Indonesian carries greater social prestige and offers better economic opportunities for the younger generation.

The authors emphasize that this pattern of language use leads to the weakening of natural language transmission within the home environment. Children grow up as passive bilinguals — they can understand their ethnic language but rarely use it actively. As a result, the process of language shift accelerates, with Indonesian becoming the dominant language while local languages are confined to traditional ceremonies or communication with older family members.

The study also highlights broader external influences such as urbanization, digital media, and the national education system, which further reinforce the dominance of Indonesian. In urban areas, regional languages are often perceived as less prestigious or irrelevant, leading younger generations to abandon them in favor of languages associated with modernity and upward mobility.

Pramuniati et al. (2023) conclude that without deliberate intervention through cultural-based education, community initiatives, and family awareness, regional languages in North Sumatra including Mandailing face the serious risk of language endangerment or eventual extinction. Their findings underline that intergenerational language shift is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a reflection of broader social, economic, and ideological transformations in multilingual Indonesian society.

In their study, Novarisa, Komala Sari, and Alvan Ikoku (2022) explore how code mixing functions as a common linguistic behavior among bilingual speakers in Indonesia, particularly within educational and social contexts. The authors argue that code mixing the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a single discourse reflects not only linguistic creativity but also an adaptive response to social and cultural realities in a multilingual nation. The study focuses on students who naturally switch between Indonesian and local languages, showing that the phenomenon is not merely random but governed by pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors such as context, audience, and communicative purpose.

Novarisa et al. (2022) found that younger speakers frequently insert Indonesian lexical items into their local language speech to express modern concepts or ideas for which their ethnic language lacks equivalent terms. Over time, this pattern leads to lexical simplification and hybridization, where the traditional vocabulary of regional languages becomes replaced or merged with Indonesian forms. The authors identify this as part of an internal linguistic change process that occurs under prolonged contact between languages. This change often results in the erosion of unique linguistic structures such as phonological distinctions, idiomatic expressions, and morphological patterns that once characterized the heritage language.

The study further highlights that education and media play significant roles in reinforcing this shift. As schools and digital platforms predominantly use Indonesian, students' exposure to their local languages becomes limited to home and informal settings. Consequently, the younger generation develops a mixed linguistic repertoire a hybrid speech style that blends Indonesian syntax and lexicon with local phonetic features. Although such linguistic adaptation demonstrates flexibility and modern identity, it also accelerates the loss of linguistic purity and the gradual decline of authentic regional languages.

Novarisa et al. (2022) conclude that code mixing in Indonesian bilingual communities reflects both the richness and the vulnerability of linguistic diversity. While it signifies creativity and intercultural competence, it also indicates a shift toward

structural simplification and cultural assimilation. To address this issue, the authors recommend integrating local language preservation programs within educational curricula and promoting awareness of linguistic heritage among youth. Without deliberate revitalization efforts, internal linguistic adaptation driven by globalization and education may lead to irreversible structural erosion, as seen in languages like Mandailing.This shift has also caused an intergenerational communication gap. Older speakers, who still use traditional Mandailing expressions, often find it difficult to communicate effectively with younger family members who are more comfortable in Indonesian.

In their 2024 study, Indrawati, Puspani and Sukarini examine the language attitudes of adolescents in the village of Pedawa (a traditional village turned tourism destination in northern Bali) towards their native language, Bali Age (BA), within the context of multilingual contact and regional-tourism development.

The authors argue that assessing language attitudes in such a multilingual, socially changing environment is crucial to understanding the process of language shift. The village's recent exposure to tourism and increased interaction in the national language (Indonesian) raises the question whether youth are shifting their attitudes away from their heritage language in favour of languages of broader communication.

The study employed a mixed methodology: questionnaire distribution and in-depth interviews among adolescents (the age group is not specified in this summary) to measure indicators of language attitude: frequency of usage of BA compared to Indonesian and Balinese (Dataran dialect), as well as attitudinal questions (six items) about their perception of their native language.

The results surprisingly show that despite the tourism development and greater contact with outsiders/Indonesian language domains, these adolescents maintain a positive attitude toward their native language. According to the authors, the frequency scale comparing usage of BA with Indonesian and Balinese also reflected favourable responses for BA. One key factor the authors highlight is the remote location of the village and scarce public transportation, which limits extensive outside interaction and may contribute to the sustained positive attitudes. They suggest that the physical isolation reduces the penetration of dominant language domains and perhaps slows the language shift process, thus allowing youth to retain positive affect toward BA.

The authors caution however that positive attitude does not necessarily guarantee high usage or transmission of the language, especially in domains of education, media, and peer-interaction outside the home. They highlight that attitude and actual linguistic behaviour may diverge: while youth may say they value their heritage language, the increasingly dominant role of Indonesian and tourism-driven multilingualism could still erode usage over time. Although the paper reports positive attitudes, it implicitly reinforces the idea that shifts in domain use, prestige and generational practice present ongoing risks.

Understanding this language change among the younger Mandailing generation is therefore crucial for cultural preservation and educational policy. By identifying the linguistic factors contributing to this shift and exploring how it affects intergenerational communication, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of minority language maintenance in a multilingual nation like Indonesia. This research will

contribute not only to the field of sociolinguistics but also to the efforts of sustaining linguistic diversity and strengthening cultural identity in local communities.

According to Pramuniati et al. (2025), the phenomenon of language shift in North Sumatra illustrates how intergenerational transmission of regional languages is being weakened by parents' conscious choices and social attitudes. Their study, conducted across several multilingual areas such as Asahan, Langkat, Labuhanbatu, and Tapanuli Tengah, reveals that even though parents are fluent speakers of local or ethnic languages, they predominantly choose to raise their children using Indonesian. This decision is not due to a lack of affection for their heritage language but rather stems from a pragmatic belief that fluency in Indonesian offers better access to education, social mobility, and future employment.

Pramuniati and her colleagues explain that language choice within the home domain plays a pivotal role in maintaining or diminishing linguistic continuity. When Indonesian becomes the primary medium of interaction between parents and children, the regional language gradually loses its functional and emotional space. Over time, this pattern creates a linguistic imbalance where the younger generation can understand their ethnic language passively but rarely speak it actively. The authors describe this as a "silent shift" a situation in which speakers are still aware of their ethnic language's existence, yet no longer transmit it in natural contexts of family life.

The researchers further emphasize that this phenomenon is closely tied to perceptions of language prestige and modernization. Parents tend to associate Indonesian with national identity, sophistication, and academic success, while regional languages are often perceived as outdated or lacking economic value. As a result, the use of local languages becomes confined to ceremonial or traditional settings, losing relevance in daily communication.

According to Pramuniati et al. (2025), reversing this trend requires strategic intervention focused on the home and community domains. Revitalization should not depend solely on schools or government programs but must begin with families consciously using their regional language at home. Encouraging bilingual or bidialectal communication where Indonesian and the regional language coexist could help restore balance between practicality and cultural preservation.

According to Farisiyah and Zamzani (2018), the phenomenon of language shift from regional or local languages to Indonesian in Indonesia reflects a complex interaction between sociocultural, educational, and linguistic factors. Their study, conducted across several multilingual regions in Indonesia, aimed to explore how the use of local languages is being maintained or diminished in daily communication and which factors contribute to this process. The authors found that despite the historical richness and emotional attachment to local languages, the dominance of Indonesian as a national and unifying language has progressively reduced their functional domains, especially among younger generations.

The research highlights that external influences such as education, government policy, urbanization, and media exposure strongly encourage the use of Indonesian. Schools and formal institutions require Indonesian for instruction and assessment, shaping students' linguistic preferences from an early age. Similarly, urban migration exposes speakers to heterogeneous communities where Indonesian functions as a lingua franca, further diminishing the role of local languages. The widespread use of Indonesian

in television, films, and social media reinforces the perception that it is more modern, prestigious, and practical than local languages. As a result, many young people associate their ethnic languages with rural identity and limited upward mobility.

On the other hand, internal linguistic factors also play a significant role in accelerating language shift. The authors observe phenomena such as lexical borrowing, simplification of vocabulary, and code-mixing between Indonesian and regional languages. These processes gradually produce hybridized speech forms that erode the structural integrity of local languages. Over time, speakers may no longer use their mother tongue in pure form but rather in modified or reduced variants that blend Indonesian syntax and vocabulary.

Farisiyah and Zamzani (2018) emphasize that language maintenance requires strong family involvement and community support. The intergenerational transmission of local languages within the home is identified as the most crucial factor for sustaining linguistic vitality. Without consistent use in the domestic domain, even active regional language programs or school-based interventions may not reverse the ongoing decline. The study concludes that preserving Indonesia's linguistic diversity demands a conscious balance between promoting the national language for unity and ensuring the continued relevance of local languages for cultural identity.

This study is particularly relevant to the Mandailing context, as similar external pressures (education, media, and urbanization) and internal processes (borrowing and simplification) are contributing to the decline of the Mandailing language among the younger generation.

According to Sullivan et al. (2021), the intergenerational transmission of language plays a fundamental role in maintaining linguistic continuity and cultural identity within a community. Their research highlights that language skills and preferences are not only cognitive abilities but also deeply embedded social behaviors that reflect family interaction patterns. When parents consistently use their heritage language in daily communication, children are more likely to internalize both linguistic competence and cultural values associated with that language. Conversely, when parents shift to a dominant language motivated by educational or socioeconomic aspirations their children gradually lose active proficiency in their ancestral tongue. This process leads to a subtle but significant breakdown in cultural continuity, as language serves as the main vehicle for transmitting shared values, stories, and traditions.

Sullivan et al. also found that reduced parental use of heritage language correlates with lower emotional bonding between generations. When children and elders communicate in different linguistic codes, misunderstandings easily arise not only linguistically but also emotionally because certain cultural expressions cannot be translated precisely into another language. This aligns with the condition observed among the Mandailing community, where younger members often prefer Indonesian while elders remain attached to traditional Mandailing speech. Such differences in linguistic preference create communicative gaps that weaken the social cohesion of families and communities.

Furthermore, Sullivan et al. emphasize the sociocultural pressure that drives language shift. In modern and globalized contexts, dominant languages such as Indonesian and English are associated with education, urban mobility, and prestige. This association makes minority language speakers perceive their own language as less

valuable or less practical. Consequently, younger generations may abandon their local language to align themselves with broader social networks and perceived opportunities. The outcome is a symbolic disconnection from their ethnic heritage and a restructuring of identity based on mainstream linguistic norms.

In the case of Mandailing youth, this theoretical framework helps explain the declining use of the Mandailing language in domestic and social domains. The issue is not merely linguistic but also emotional and cultural. Sustaining intergenerational communication, therefore, requires more than encouraging bilingual ability it demands conscious efforts from families and educational institutions to maintain meaningful use of the local language as part of everyday life and cultural belonging (Sullivan et al., 2021).

Several studies support this observation. Pramuniati (2020) notes that North Sumatran youths increasingly favor Indonesian in family and social interactions. Nasution & Sembiring (2018) show lexical interference where Mandailing words are replaced or mixed with Indonesian, creating a shift in language patterns. Putri et al. (2019) emphasize that communication choices among Mandailing youth affect social cohesion and cultural identity.

Understanding linguistic factors and intergenerational communication gaps among Mandailing youth is crucial for cultural preservation. Identifying these patterns provides insights into how minority languages can be maintained amidst social, educational, and technological pressures. This study aims to explore the forms and causes of Mandailing language change and its impact on family and community communication in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu village, Siabu, Mandailing Natal, contributing to sociolinguistic knowledge and practical strategies for language revitalization.

Based on initial observations conducted in Pintu Padang Julu Village, particularly in Lorong 2, indications were found that the use of Mandailing among the younger generation is starting to decline significantly. Brief interviews with five teenagers aged 17–22 revealed that four of them frequently used Indonesian in daily communication with their peers, despite having a passive understanding of Mandailing. Respondents stated that Indonesian felt more practical and appropriate for school environments, social media, and interactions outside the home.

Furthermore, observations within the family environment revealed differences in communication patterns between the older and younger generations. Most parents still used Mandailing when speaking to their children, but the children often responded in Indonesian. This situation indicates a shift in the function of Mandailing from an active language to a receptive language.

This phenomenon is reinforced by the finding that Mandailing vocabulary related to culture, greetings, salutations, and traditional terms is rarely used by young people. Several respondents also reported difficulty pronouncing certain words without a mixture of Indonesian. These preliminary data indicate that the Mandailing language is in a stage of change characterized by declining usage, structural simplification, and weakening intergenerational transmission. These preliminary findings provide an important basis for research exploring the linguistic factors driving this change.

B. **Research Question**

1. What are the forms and patterns of Mandailing language change among the younger generation?

2. Which linguistic factors contribute to the transformation of the Mandailing language?

C. **The Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the changes occurring in the Mandailing language among the younger generation and to understand the implications of these changes for intergenerational communication. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To identify and describe the forms and patterns of Mandailing language change among the younger generation, including alterations in vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and usage domains.
2. To examine the linguistic factors that contribute to the transformation of the Mandailing language, such as internal processes (e.g., simplification, borrowing, code-mixing) and external influences (e.g., education, media exposure, and language contact with Indonesian or English).

D. **Significance of the study**

Uriarte and Sperlich (2021) present a novel theoretical and empirical approach to understanding how minority languages decline in bilingual societies, through what they term a "behavioural game model". Their study focuses on three modern bilingual contexts (the Basque Country, Ireland, and Wales) where a majority language (A) and a minority language (B) coexist under official status. Despite institutional support for B, the researchers observe persistent decline in its use.

The authors critique prior formal models (often derived from physics or reaction-diffusion frameworks) for failing to incorporate behavioural decision-making by bilingual speakers. They argue that bilinguals make strategic choices in everyday interactions: whether to reveal their bilingual identity and use language B (heritage/minority), or to hide it and default to majority language A. These decisions are influenced by social context, perceived interlocutors' language competence, and uncertainty about whether the partner can use B. bilinguals repeatedly play what they call the "Language Use Game (LUG)". Two pure strategies are defined: "Reveal" (choose B when possible) or "Hide" (choose A to avoid risk or uncertainty). Using replicator-dynamics modeling, the authors prove that, under reasonable assumptions, the population will converge to an evolutionary stable strategy (ESS) in which a non-zero proportion of bilinguals shift to A. In other words, even among bilinguals, over time language B is used less as the social interaction structure leads to convention formation in favour of A.

To validate their theoretical predictions, Uriarte & Sperlich compare model outcomes with empirical data on street use of Basque, and daily use of Irish and Welsh. The fit is good: their model's predicted equilibrium proportions closely match observed declines in B-language use in these communities. This empirical evidence strengthens the claim that language shift is not simply a matter of external policy or demographic forces, but also of interactive decisions by individuals under uncertainty.

The study has several implications relevant to your research on the Mandailing language. It underscores how micro-level interactional decisions (whether to use the heritage language) aggregate into macro-level language shift. It also shows that even when minority languages have institutional support, internal dynamics of social interaction can work against maintenance. Therefore, for Mandailing, beyond educational policy or

media representation, attention must be given to how young speakers choose to use (or not use) Mandailing in interactions and how uncertainty about interlocutor competence, domain pressures, and social contexts may drive them to default to Indonesian.

In sum, Uriarte &Sperlich (2021) deepen theoretical understanding of language shift by combining behavioural game theory with empirical sociolinguistics. Their work suggests that sustaining a minority language requires not just favorable domains and policies, but also changing interactional conventions and everyday language practice among speakers.Practically, the findings of this research are valuable for the Mandailing community, educators, and policymakers. For the community, understanding patterns of language change can raise awareness among parents and youth about the importance of maintaining the Mandailing language as a vital cultural heritage. For educators, the study offers guidance in developing curricula or programs that integrate local language preservation with modern education. For policymakers, the research provides evidence to support language revitalization initiatives, ensuring that minority languages like Mandailing continue to thrive despite the influence of dominant languages.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of sustaining linguistic diversity, bridging communication gaps between generations, and preserving cultural identity in the Mandailing community. The research outcomes aim to inspire collaborative efforts in safeguarding the language while fostering positive attitudes among younger speakers toward their linguistic heritage.

E. **Key Terms**

This study examines the Mandailing language and its usage among the younger generation, specifically individuals aged 17 to 25 years, living in Mandailing communities in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The research aims to explore the linguistic factors driving changes in the language, focusing on aspects such as vocabulary shifts, pronunciation variations, and sentence structure modifications. In addition, the study investigates the impact of these changes on communication between younger and older generations, identifying potential gaps or misunderstandings that may arise due to differing language practices. Another key focus of the study is the attitudes of young Mandailing speakers toward their heritage language. By examining perceptions of prestige, social relevance, and cultural identity, the research seeks to understand how these attitudes influence language use and transmission. Ultimately, this study provides insight into the dynamics of language change within a minority language community and contributes to discussions on language maintenance and cultural preservation.

Despite its contributions, this research has several limitations. First, the study is confined to selected Mandailing communities, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all Mandailing youths across Indonesia. Second, the research primarily relies on qualitative methods, including interviews, questionnaires, and participant observation, making the data potentially subject to participants' personal perceptions and biases. Third, the focus is restricted to language use in family and community contexts, leaving out formal educational or professional domains where language practices may differ. Finally, although the study considers social and technological factors influencing language change, it does not extensively address historical, political, or institutional influences that may also play a significant role in shaping language attitudes and usage

patterns. Recognizing these limitations helps to contextualize the findings and highlights areas for further investigation into the dynamics of Mandailing language change.

Despite these limitations, the research provides valuable insights into the patterns of Mandailing language change and the intergenerational communication gaps within the community, contributing to strategies for language preservation and cultural continuity.

Literature Review

A. Language Change and Language Shift

Language change is a dynamic process driven by both internal and external pressures that shape how linguistic forms evolve over time. Communicative needs play a significant role in determining which variants of words, structures, or pronunciations become dominant within a speech community. When speakers encounter social, educational, or technological changes, they may adopt forms from dominant languages or innovate within their own language to facilitate efficient communication. This process often results in simplification, borrowing, or hybridization of linguistic forms. Language shift occurs when speakers gradually replace their native or heritage language with another, often due to perceived social, economic, or cultural advantages. Both micro-level choices by individual speakers and macro-level social pressures contribute to the gradual transformation or even replacement of a language within a community (Karjus, Blythe, Kirby, & Smith, 2020).

Renddan & Seruji (2023) investigated language shift in the Bajau Sama community of Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia, focusing on four language domains: speaking, understanding, reading, and writing. The study employed a cross-sectional method, with 243 respondents selected through stratified sampling across young and middle-aged groups.

The findings revealed that the dominant language, Malay, now predominates in daily communication within the Bajau Sama community, including among adolescents and adults, while the native Bajau Sama language has declined across all four domains. In other words, the younger generation acts as agents of language change, increasingly preferring Malay over their mother tongue.

The study also found that proficiency in the mother tongue does not necessarily correlate with its actual use; individuals may understand Bajau Sama but still choose to communicate in Malay in daily interactions. Furthermore, intergenerational transmission of the native language has weakened: its use at home and in informal environments has been largely replaced by Malay, indicating a gradual decline in both competence and usage across generations.

Renddan & Seruji identified several factors driving this language shift: one-sided bilingualism favoring the dominant language, higher socioeconomic status associated with Malay, and institutional and educational pressures prioritizing the national or dominant language. They recommended developing a Bajau Sama language corpus and implementing revitalization initiatives to strengthen the use of the mother tongue in everyday domains.

This study is highly relevant to research on minority languages such as Mandailing, as it demonstrates similar patterns: the dominant language gradually replaces the

heritage language across multiple domains, particularly among the younger generation, and intergenerational transmission is increasingly threatened.

Uriarte & Sperlich (2021) developed a theoretical and empirical framework to understand minority language shift through a behavioral approach. They emphasize that language shift is influenced not only by demographic factors or policies but also by the everyday decisions of individual speakers. The authors introduce the concept of the Language Use Game, in which bilingual speakers strategically choose whether to use the minority language (B) or the dominant language (A) in conversations. This choice is shaped by perceptions of the interlocutor's language competence, social risks, and the practical benefits of using the dominant language.

The model employs replicator dynamics to predict an evolutionarily stable strategy (ESS), showing that even if some individuals continue using the minority language, most interactions tend to shift toward the dominant language over time. In other words, micro-level choices by individuals accumulate into macro-level effects that accelerate language shift.

To validate their model, Uriarte & Sperlich analyzed language use in Basque, Irish, and Welsh communities. Their findings closely matched the model's predictions: minority language use gradually declined, while the dominant language became the normative medium of interaction, even in contexts with institutional support for the minority language.

The implications of this study are highly relevant for other minority language communities, including Mandailing. The model demonstrates that language change (structural and lexical changes) often accompanies language shift (replacement by a dominant language), and the two processes reinforce each other. The preservation of a minority language depends not only on formal policies or education but also on daily social interactions, individual language choices, and the broader social context.

Thus, Uriarte & Sperlich (2021) provide a conceptual framework for understanding how behavioral and social factors influence the survival of minority languages and offer critical insights for developing effective strategies for language maintenance and revitalization.

B. Linguistic Factors in Language Change

Language change is often driven by a combination of internal linguistic factors and external social influences. Internal factors include phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic elements that evolve as speakers adapt their language to communicative needs. According to Bybee (2017), structural features of a language, such as frequent lexical items or common grammatical patterns, are particularly susceptible to change because they are reinforced through repeated usage. Over time, these repeated patterns can shift, simplify, or merge with other forms, resulting in gradual alterations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

In minority language contexts, such as Mandailing, internal linguistic factors interact with external pressures from dominant languages like Indonesian. Exposure to Indonesian through education, media, and peer interactions encourages speakers especially younger generations to adopt lexical borrowings, calques, or syntactic structures from the dominant language. Phonological shifts may also occur as speakers accommodate the sounds of Indonesian, leading to hybrid pronunciations. Semantic

changes can arise when words or expressions from the minority language acquire new meanings under the influence of the dominant language.

This process illustrates how language adaptation is not merely a matter of social preference but also involves structural transformations that accumulate over time. As these internal changes reinforce patterns associated with the dominant language, the functional distinctiveness of the minority language diminishes. Over successive generations, this can weaken intergenerational transmission and accelerate language shift.

Understanding the role of linguistic factors in language change is crucial for language preservation strategies. By identifying which structural elements are most susceptible to influence, policymakers and educators can design targeted interventions to maintain core aspects of minority languages. This approach underscores the importance of considering both social and structural dimensions in efforts to sustain linguistic diversity and cultural identity.Phonological changes involve modifications in pronunciation patterns. For example, younger speakers may simplify complex sounds or adopt pronunciations influenced by Indonesian, leading to gradual erosion of the original phonetic features. Lexical changes include borrowing words from Indonesian or creating hybrid expressions that mix Mandailing and Indonesian vocabulary. Syntactic changes, on the other hand, involve alterations in sentence structures, such as shifts in word order or simplification of grammatical rules. Semantic changes occur when the meanings of certain words evolve or broaden due to exposure to new concepts and contexts.

The study Students' Views on Language Diversity and Heritage Language Maintenance in the Indonesian Context (2023) investigated university students' attitudes toward heritage and local languages in Indonesia. The research aimed to understand how students perceive the value of these languages in comparison to dominant languages such as Indonesian and English. Using surveys and interviews, the study found that students generally recognized the symbolic and cultural importance of heritage languages, acknowledging their role in preserving identity, traditions, and local knowledge.

However, despite these positive attitudes, students' actual language practices revealed a significant gap. Indonesian and English were consistently prioritized in daily interactions, academic work, and professional communication due to their perceived utility and prestige. Heritage languages, while appreciated in principle, were rarely used outside of family contexts or ceremonial settings. This mismatch highlights a key sociolinguistic phenomenon: positive attitudes alone are insufficient to maintain active use of a minority or heritage language.

The study further emphasized the influence of social, educational, and technological factors. Peer interactions, media exposure, and the educational environment encouraged the use of dominant languages, accelerating the decline in the functional use of heritage languages. The findings underscore the need for targeted strategies that not only raise awareness of cultural value but also create practical contexts for the continued use of heritage languages among younger speakers.

Understanding these linguistic factors is essential for explaining why and how language change occurs in minority communities. By analyzing phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic shifts, along with attitudes toward language, researchers can identify patterns that inform efforts to preserve the Mandailing language and strengthen intergenerational communication.

C. Intergenerational Communication Gaps

Intergenerational communication gaps refer to difficulties in understanding and interaction between different age groups within a community, often caused by differences in language use, cultural values, and social experiences. These gaps are particularly pronounced in minority-language communities where younger generations increasingly adopt dominant languages, while older generations maintain traditional language patterns. Cox Jr. et al. (2021) describe this phenomenon as "shared language erosion," observed in immigrant families where adolescents prefer the dominant societal language, such as English, while parents continue using their heritage language. This divergence reduces the amount of shared linguistic space, leading to miscommunication, weakened emotional bonding, and disruptions in cultural transmission.

In the context of minority languages like Mandailing, similar patterns are observable. Younger speakers often favor Indonesian or hybrid forms in social interactions, schools, and digital communication, whereas older family members continue using traditional Mandailing expressions. This difference in language preference and usage can impede effective communication between generations and threaten the transmission of cultural knowledge embedded in the language. Research shows that the gap is not merely linguistic; it also encompasses differing social norms, values, and worldviews, which are encoded in language practices. When young speakers are less exposed to these traditional forms, they may miss nuances of cultural meaning and social etiquette embedded in the heritage language, further widening the generational divide.

Social, educational, and technological factors exacerbate these gaps. Schools often prioritize the national language, and digital platforms expose youth to content in dominant languages, increasing their reliance on these languages for communication. Peer influence reinforces these patterns, as adolescents often adapt their speech to align with their friends, who may also favor dominant languages. Over time, these behavioral patterns accumulate, contributing not only to language shift but also to a structural and functional divergence between generations within the same community.

Understanding intergenerational communication gaps is critical for minority-language maintenance. Strategies aimed at revitalizing heritage languages must consider both the structural aspects of the language and the social dynamics between age groups. Programs that encourage shared language use in family and community settings, alongside formal education, can help mitigate communication gaps, strengthen intergenerational bonds, and ensure the continuity of linguistic and cultural heritage. In the case of the Mandailing community, these gaps are evident as youths increasingly prefer Indonesian or hybrid forms of Mandailing, leading to challenges in communicating with parents and grandparents who speak traditional Mandailing fluently.

The phenomenon is compounded by social and technological factors. Digital media, social networking platforms, and online communication introduce new vocabulary and linguistic styles that younger speakers adopt rapidly, often bypassing traditional linguistic norms. This accelerates the divergence between generations and increases the risk of language erosion.

In the Mandailing context, analyzing these dynamics provides insights into why younger speakers may increasingly prefer Indonesian over Mandailing and how this trend affects intergenerational understanding. Addressing these communication gaps is crucial not only for sustaining the Mandailing language but also for preserving its associated

cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion, and promoting mutual respect between generations. Strategic efforts in this domain can help ensure that the Mandailing language remains a living, functional, and culturally significant mode of communication across generations.

D. Previous Studies

Several studies have examined language change, language shift, and intergenerational communication within minority language communities, providing important insights relevant to the Mandailing context. Pramuniati (2020) investigated language shift among North Sumatran youths, highlighting that regional-speaking parents increasingly raise their children using Indonesian. The study found that exposure to education, media, and peer groups significantly influences language choice, leading to reduced use of regional languages in daily life. This finding illustrates how external social pressures contribute to language change among younger speakers.

Nasution and Sembiring (2018) focused on lexical interference in the Angkola-Mandailing dialect, showing that younger speakers frequently adopt Indonesian vocabulary in place of traditional Mandailing words. This interference affects both spoken and written forms of the language, creating hybrid forms that diverge from the original linguistic system. Their research underscores the role of linguistic factors such as borrowing, simplification, and adaptation in shaping language change.

Putri et al. (2019) analyzed social interactions in Mandailing and Batak Toba communities, revealing that intergenerational communication gaps arise when younger speakers favor Indonesian or hybrid forms. The study highlighted the cultural and emotional consequences of these gaps, emphasizing the need for strategies to preserve heritage languages. Similarly, research on digital communication (e.g., Code Shift in Generation Z in Indonesia, 2021) found that social media accelerates language change by introducing new lexical items and informal language patterns that younger speakers adopt rapidly.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that both social and linguistic factors drive language change, while intergenerational communication gaps pose a risk to cultural and linguistic continuity. However, few studies have specifically addressed the Mandailing language in relation to younger generations and family communication. This research aims to fill that gap by examining how linguistic factors contribute to Mandailing language change and how such changes affect communication between youth and older generations.

Methods

A. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design to explore how the Mandailing language is changing among the younger generation, and how those changes create intergenerational communication gaps. Qualitative descriptive design is particularly suited to studies that aim for a straightforward, rich description of phenomena as experienced by participants in their natural context. The design emphasises capturing participants' views, attitudes, behaviours, and the social, cultural, and linguistic contexts in which they occur (Doyle, McCabe, Keogh, Brady & McCann, 2020).

By adopting a descriptive approach, the research aims to identify patterns and forms of language change (for example changes in vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax) and the resulting communication dynamics between younger and older generations, without attempting to build a new theory. This aligns with qualitative descriptive studies which stay "data-near" and focus on what is happening rather than on developing an abstract theoretical model.

The qualitative design provides flexibility in method choice, allowing the researcher to combine interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis to capture multiple perspectives and domains of language use. This is especially relevant in a multilingual and multi-domain environment such as Mandailing, where language change may occur in family communication, peer interaction, schooling, social media, and community life. According to Colorafi & Evans (2016), the descriptive design allows for a variety of data collection and analysis strategies, while acknowledging the need for methodological clarity and rigour.

Moreover, this design allows the research to explore intergenerational communication gaps in situ: how younger speakers' changing language patterns contrast with the traditional patterns of older generations; how these differences influence understanding, emotional bonding, and cultural transmission. Qualitative descriptive research is apt for detecting these mismatches in language use and attitude because it emphasizes detailed accounts of interaction and context. For example, when younger speakers adopt simplified forms, borrow widely, or mix languages, older speakers may experience reduced comprehension or miscommunication phenomena that can be captured through observation and narrative descriptions.

In selecting a qualitative design, the researcher commits to immersion in the community, purposive sampling of participants, and thematic or content-based analysis of the data. As Elliott, Christy & Xiao (2023) emphasise, qualitative design requires consideration of ontological and epistemological assumptions (how we know what we know) and the research context.

Finally, the descriptive design supports the practical significance of the study. Because the goal is not to generalise statistically to all Mandailing speakers, but to generate detailed, context-rich insights about younger generation language change and its implications for intergenerational communication, the qualitative descriptive approach is well aligned with the study's aims. It allows the researcher to generate findings that can inform community-centered interventions, language education programmes, and heritage language maintenance strategies.

B. **Research Design**

This research will be conducted in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu Village, Siabu, Mandailing Natal. where the Mandailing language is still actively used in family, social, and community interactions. These communities provide a representative setting for observing the dynamics of language use across generations, as they maintain traditional linguistic practices while simultaneously being exposed to Indonesian and other dominant languages. The selection of North Sumatra is strategic, as it allows access to Mandailing populations, both rural and semi-urban, offering insights into how environmental and social contexts influence language change.

The research will last one week. This timeframe was allocated to ensure comprehensive data collection through a variety of methods, including interviews with younger speakers and older family members, participant observation at homes and community events, and analysis of written and digital Mandailing materials. This duration also allows sufficient time for follow-up, clarification of responses during member checks, and cross-verification of observations to enhance data reliability.

Conducting the research during this period also accommodates the cultural and social calendar of the Mandailing community, allowing researchers to observe language use, both routine and ceremonial. By placing the research in a context where Mandailing is still functionally active, this research can capture authentic patterns of linguistic change and intergenerational communication gaps in real-life contexts.

C. **Location and Time**

This research will be conducted in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu Village, Siabu District, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This location was selected because it represents a Mandailing community where the native language is still actively used in daily communication, family interactions, and cultural practices. Focusing on this village allows the researcher to study language change in a context where traditional Mandailing forms are preserved while younger generations are increasingly influenced by dominant languages such as Indonesian and English.

The study is scheduled to take place over one weeks. This timeframe ensures that data can be collected comprehensively through multiple qualitative methods, including interviews with younger and older speakers, participant observations in homes, schools, and community gatherings, and the collection of written or digital materials in Mandailing. The period also allows for follow-up sessions, verification of participant responses, and observation of various social and cultural events, which are essential for understanding both routine and ceremonial language use.

By conducting the research in this specific location and timeframe, the study aims to capture authentic patterns of Mandailing language change, the factors influencing these changes, and the resulting intergenerational communication gaps. The selected community provides a representative microcosm to understand broader linguistic trends while allowing for in-depth, context-sensitive data collection.

D. **Source of Data**

The primary data for this study will be obtained from Mandailing youths aged 17–25 years and older members of the community in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu Village, Siabu District, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra. Younger participants are chosen because they are the main agents of linguistic change, showing how the Mandailing language evolves in vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and usage patterns. Older participants serve as a comparative group, providing insights into traditional language forms and helping to identify intergenerational communication gaps.

Participants will be selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who actively use the Mandailing language in daily life, family interactions, or community activities. The sample will include both male and female participants to capture potential gender-related variations in language use.

In addition to primary participants, secondary data will be collected from written Mandailing texts, social media content, and community documents to complement

observational and interview data. These sources will provide additional evidence of language change in different domains and help triangulate findings.

By combining data from multiple sources youth, older speakers, and textual materials the study aims to present a comprehensive picture of Mandailing language change, the factors influencing it, and the effects on intergenerational communication.

E. Technique of Data Collection

This study employs multiple qualitative data collection techniques to ensure comprehensive and reliable data on Mandailing language change and intergenerational communication gaps. Using a combination of methods allows the researcher to capture participants' experiences, behaviors, and attitudes in different social contexts, providing a holistic understanding of linguistic dynamics.

This study used several indicators to measure changes in the Mandailing language among the younger generation. Phonological indicators include changes in pronunciation and intonation influenced by Indonesian. Lexical indicators include the use of borrowed vocabulary, the loss of traditional words, and code-mixing. Syntactic indicators include changes in sentence structure and word order patterns. Factors contributing to change include the influence of education, digital media, social environment, and language choice within the family. Intergenerational communication indicators include difficulty understanding traditional vocabulary, differences in language choice when speaking, and a lack of Mandailing language interaction at home.

The first technique is semi-structured interviews with younger and older Mandailing speakers. These interviews focus on language use in daily interactions, perceptions of language prestige, experiences with code-mixing or language borrowing, and awareness of intergenerational communication gaps. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility, enabling participants to express their thoughts in their own words while allowing the researcher to probe for clarification or deeper insights.

The second technique is participant observation. The researcher observes participants in natural settings such as homes, community gatherings, schools, and local markets. Observation helps identify authentic patterns of language use, including how younger speakers modify traditional Mandailing structures, how older speakers respond, and instances of miscommunication. Field notes are recorded systematically to ensure detailed documentation.

Third, questionnaires are administered to collect quantitative-like information regarding the frequency and domains of Mandailing use, preferred language choices, and exposure to Indonesian or English. While primarily qualitative, this instrument complements interviews and observations by highlighting patterns that may require further exploration.

Lastly, document analysis is conducted on community texts, social media posts, and written Mandailing materials. This provides additional evidence of language change in written forms and helps triangulate data from interviews and observations.

By using triangulation across these data collection methods, the study increases the credibility and validity of the findings. Each technique complements the others, ensuring that the data reflect both the structural and social aspects of Mandailing language change.

Findings and Discussion

A. Research participant

This research was conducted in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu Village, Siabu District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra. This village is one of the areas that still maintains Mandailing culture and language in daily life. Geographically, Pintu Padang Julu is located in a hilly area with a peaceful rural atmosphere, surrounded by rice fields, fields, and traditional villages. The majority of residents in this village work as farmers, small traders, and daily laborers, resulting in intense and open social interactions within the community.

Lorong 2 was chosen as the research location because the community in this area still actively uses Mandailing in family life, traditional activities, and social communication. However, the younger generation is showing changes in language patterns with the increasing use of Indonesian, particularly in educational contexts, social interactions, and digital media. This situation provides an ideal opportunity to observe changes in Mandailing language and the communication gap between generations.

Pintu Padang Julu Village has educational infrastructure, such as elementary and secondary schools that use Indonesian as the primary language of instruction. This contributes to strengthening the dominance of Indonesian among teenagers and young people. With these social conditions, this research location is very relevant for analyzing the real process of change in the Mandailing language in the lives of local communities.

The informants in this study consisted of two groups: the younger generation and the older generation in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu. The younger generation group consisted of two people, aged 17–25 years. They consisted of men and women with high school to college educations. The majority came from farming families and local traders. Meanwhile, the older generation group consisted of one person, aged 45–70 years, most of whom had elementary to secondary education. They came from traditional Mandailing families who still use the Mandailing language in their daily lives, especially in family, cultural, and social activities.

The Mandailing community in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu, exhibits a dynamic sociolinguistic landscape. The older generation still uses Mandailing for daily communication, particularly at home, during traditional ceremonies, religious activities, and in interactions with neighbors. However, the younger generation is experiencing a language shift, with Indonesian becoming more dominant in education, social media, and social interactions. This situation has given rise to two distinct language patterns within the community. Although most residents understand Mandailing, not all of the younger generation actively use it, creating a communication gap between generations within the family and community.

B. Data Description

Interviews were conducted with two young informants aged 17–25 and one adult informants aged 45–70. The interviews revealed that most young informants stated that they felt more comfortable using Mandailing, but that many of the vocabulary items were being phased out, particularly when communicating with peers and through digital media. They considered Indonesian to be more practical, easier to understand, and more in line with the language of education they received at school. Conversely, adult informants emphasized that Mandailing remained the primary language of choice at

home and in traditional settings, although they acknowledged that their children rarely responded to conversations in Mandailing. Older informants also expressed concern about the loss of traditional vocabulary previously used in family interactions. Several senior informants emphasized that language shift was causing communication difficulties and a reduction in emotional closeness between generations.

Observations show that the use of Mandailing among the younger generation is limited to specific situations, such as when speaking with parents, attending traditional events, or when conveying traditional greetings. In informal situations between friends, Indonesian is more dominant. In village conversations, the older generation consistently uses Mandailing in social interactions at coffee shops, in the fields, and at religious activities. However, young people often respond in Indonesian despite understanding Mandailing conversations. Observations also show forms of code-mixing, such as combining Indonesian sentence structures with Mandailing vocabulary, as well as the loss of some native phonological elements.

Documentation was obtained through photographs of conversations between youth and parents, language records on social media, and photos of traditional activities. Photos show that intergenerational conversations at home usually begin in Mandailing, a language that has been significantly modified by parents, but children respond in Indonesian. On social media, youth posts are almost entirely in Indonesian, with Mandailing vocabulary very rarely found. Village documentation shows that Mandailing is still used formally in prayers, traditional speeches, and greetings at cultural events, but young participants often appear to have little understanding of the old terms used.

C. **Forms and Patterns of Mandailing Language Change**

Changes in the Mandailing language among the younger generation in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu, show clear patterns, particularly in vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence structure, and changes in the domains of language use. Social factors, education, and language contact with Indonesian have caused Mandailing to experience shifts in form and function in society, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

1. Vocabulary Shifts

   The most obvious change is seen in the shift in vocabulary. The younger generation is using less typical Mandailing vocabulary in everyday conversation, even replacing it with new Indonesian and Mandailing vocabulary. For example, Mandailing words like "marsibarita" (telling a story), "molo" (if), and "parhobasan" (proverb) are increasingly used less, replaced by "marcarito," "anggo," and "pepatah." This shift indicates a loss of traditional lexicon, particularly cultural terms, traditional greetings, and emotional expressions. Some teenagers no longer understand vocabulary related to traditional expressions, such as "tondi," "ulaon," and "tarsapo." This indicates that traditional vocabulary is beginning to disappear from the linguistic memory of the younger generation.

2. Pronunciation Changes

   Changes in pronunciation are also evident. The older generation still maintains the distinctive Mandailing phonological sounds, such as the pronunciation of the back vowels /o/ and /a/ at the end of words. However, the younger generation often adapts their pronunciation to Indonesian phonology. For example, the word "hami" (we) changes to "ami," and the word "kehe" (go) is pronounced "ke." The

loss of traditional sound stress leads to changes in rhythm, weakening the authentic character of Mandailing phonology among younger generations.

3. Generational Gap in Language Use

This shift in language forms creates a communication gap between generations. Older adults use Mandailing in its traditional and complex form, while younger adults prefer a hybrid language and new Mandailing vocabulary. This gap leads to miscommunication, especially when older adults use Mandailing terms that younger generations no longer understand. Furthermore, differences in language attitudes reinforce the social and cultural distance between generations within the family.

Changes in the Mandailing language are evident in the shift in vocabulary, with traditional terms becoming less common among the younger generation and replaced by newer forms, such as Indonesian. Pronunciation also shifts to follow Indonesian sound patterns, weakening Mandailing's phonological characteristics. This difference creates a communication gap between the older generation, who use the traditional language, and the younger generation, who prefer a mixed language, leading to miscommunication within families.

D. Linguistic Factors Driving Change

The change in the Mandailing language among the younger generation in Pintu Padang Julu is influenced by four main factors: education, media and technology, urbanization, and the process of internal simplification of the language. These four factors work simultaneously and mutually support each other, accelerating the process of change in the structure, vocabulary, and domains of Mandailing language use in society.

First, the influence of education is the most powerful factor. From elementary school to university, Indonesian is the official language of instruction. Learning processes, textbooks, exams, academic interactions, and communication between students are all conducted in Indonesian. This situation marginalizes Mandailing, even considering it irrelevant for academic settings. The younger generation is becoming more confident using Indonesian because they are accustomed to using it in formal contexts, while Mandailing is restricted to informal settings. As a result, attitudes toward language have shifted: Mandailing is seen as a traditional language, while Indonesian is considered more modern and logical.

Second, media and technology reinforce language change. Social media, the internet, online games, and digital applications use either Indonesian or English. Young people spend a lot of time watching videos, reading online content, and communicating via mobile phones using the national language. This narrows the scope for Mandailing use. Furthermore, media language creates new terms and styles of language adopted by the younger generation, leading to the gradual abandonment of traditional vocabulary. Because Mandailing is virtually absent from the digital space, the language loses its functional value and appeal to younger generations.

Third, urbanization and social mobility also have a strong influence. Many Mandailing families work and attend school outside their villages. The use of Indonesian has become a social necessity in cities, resulting in the decline of regional languages. In their villages, the urge to migrate has led young people to prioritize Indonesian for their future. As a result, Mandailing is no longer considered a primary social language. Family

interactions have also changed: parents have begun communicating with their children using Indonesian to prepare them for the outside world.

Fourth, a process of internal simplification of the language occurs as the younger generation tends to eliminate linguistic elements considered difficult. Mandailing sentence structures are simplified, affixes are removed, and vocabulary is mixed with Indonesian to speed up communication. These internal changes have caused Mandailing to undergo a transformation in form and weakened its linguistic characteristics.

Taken together, these four factors explain that changes in the Mandailing language are not only linguistic but also social, cultural, and psychological. If there is no revitalization, future generations may only know Mandailing as an identity, not as a living language.

E. Implication Toward Intergenerational Communication

The shift in Mandailing language between the older and younger generations has several significant impacts on social life, particularly related to intergenerational communication barriers, the loss of traditional terms, and changes in cultural expression.

First, intergenerational communication barriers are a major issue. The older generation still uses traditional Mandailing with its original structure and vocabulary rich in cultural meaning. However, the younger generation more often uses Indonesian or a mixture of Mandailing. As a result, differences in language codes arise in family communication. Many conversations are ineffective because the younger generation does not fully understand the Mandailing expressions used by their parents and grandparents. This barrier affects emotional closeness, the way messages are conveyed, and even the resolution of family problems. Furthermore, the younger generation considers Mandailing too formal or archaic, so it is rarely used in their social interactions. This attitude widens the communication gap and weakens the intergenerational bonds that have been built through the local language.

Second, the loss of traditional terms is also a serious problem. Vocabulary such as traditional greetings, religious terms, ritual names, and kinship expressions are beginning to fade from the memory of the younger generation. They often struggle to understand words used in traditional conversations or family ceremonies. Vocabulary such as tondi, ulaon, and other traditional terms are no longer deeply understood. This ignorance indicates a process of cultural lexical erosion, where traditional vocabulary ceases to be passed down naturally.

Third, changes in cultural expression emerge as a secondary impact. Language is part of cultural identity. As the structure and vocabulary of Mandailing change, so does cultural expression. The younger generation no longer uses pantun, proverbs, or the literary style of Mandailing in their conversations. Their ways of expressing themselves are now more influenced by national and digital culture, diminishing the aesthetic value of Mandailing culture.

Overall, changes in the Mandailing language not only affect the way people speak but also touch the roots of their culture, identity, and social relationships. Without language preservation efforts, Mandailing risks losing its cultural heritage and the social closeness between generations.

F. Summary and Finding

The research results indicate significant changes in Mandailing language use among the younger generation in Lorong 2, Pintu Padang Julu. These changes are primarily evident in vocabulary, language structure, pronunciation, and the domains of language use in everyday life. The younger generation is increasingly using traditional Mandailing vocabulary and preferring Indonesian or mixed Mandailing-Indonesian vocabulary, indicating lexical erosion. Cultural vocabulary such as traditional greetings, religious terms, and traditional expressions are being forgotten and are no longer used in conversation.

Furthermore, the research results show a clear difference in pronunciation between the younger and older generations. The older generation still maintains the phonological characteristics of Mandailing, while the younger generation adapts Indonesian pronunciation patterns, weakening the original rhythm and stress. Structurally, Mandailing sentences, which were once complex, are now simplified to follow Indonesian syntactic patterns. Code-mixing is also increasingly found in the conversations of the younger generation.

In terms of language domains, Mandailing remains confined to the family, customs, and communication with the older generation. Conversely, the younger generation tends to use Indonesian in education, social media, and peer interactions. This situation emphasizes the occurrence of language shift based on social domains.

This study also found a communication gap between generations. Differences in language forms cause some messages to be incompletely conveyed, primarily because the younger generation no longer understands the traditional words used by the older generation.

The research findings indicate five main factors causing language change: the influence of education, media and technology, urbanization, the process of internal simplification of the language, and the social prestige of Indonesian. These factors are interrelated and serve as strong drivers of structural and social change in the Mandailing language.

the research indicates that the Mandailing language is undergoing a process of change and diminishing its function, especially among the younger generation. If this trend continues without preservation efforts, the Mandailing language could potentially lose its original structure, cultural values, and communicative function across generations in the future.

Conclusion

A. Conclusion

Research on changes in the Mandailing language among the younger generation reveals significant shifts in language form, linguistic causes, and its impact on intergenerational communication in Pintu Padang Julu Village. The most visible forms of language change are shifts in vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation. Many traditional Mandailing words are no longer used by the younger generation and replaced by Indonesian vocabulary or hybrid forms. This has resulted in the loss of cultural terms, traditional greetings, and traditional expressions. Phonological changes also occur as the younger generation adapts Mandailing pronunciation to Indonesian sound patterns.

Furthermore, Mandailing sentence structures, which were originally long and complex, are now simpler, following Indonesian syntax rules, with the addition of code-mixing in conversation.

These changes are due to linguistic factors originating from both external and internal sources within the Mandailing language. Internally, there is a simplification of the language, such as the removal of affixes, a reduction in structural complexity, and an expansion of meaning. Externally, education, digital media, and the social status of Indonesian are the main factors. Indonesian is used as the official language of schools and media, so the younger generation is accustomed to using it in daily activities. This dominance of the national language influences the way Mandailing youth think and speak. Furthermore, social contact outside the village has led them to prioritize communication in Indonesian.

The biggest impact of this language shift is the emergence of communication barriers between generations. The older generation still uses traditional Mandailing, rich in cultural meaning, while the younger generation prefers a mixed language or full Indonesian. These differences in language style and vocabulary lead to miscommunication, especially when traditional terms are used in family conversations. Many cultural meanings, customary expressions, and religious values are no longer understood by the younger generation. As a result, the emotional closeness between generations is weakened, and the value of Mandailing culture is diminished in daily life. If this shift continues without language preservation efforts, the existence of the Mandailing language is threatened, and the community's cultural identity could increasingly fade from generation to generation.

B. **Suggestions**

Based on the above conclusions, the researcher recommends that the community, local government, and future researchers preserve the Mandailing language to prevent it from being forgotten and creating an intergenerational gap. The researcher recommends:

1. For Society

The family is the primary environment for language transmission, so increasing the use of Mandailing at home is the most effective way to maintain its sustainability. Parents and family members should cultivate the habit of communicating in Mandailing, especially with children and adolescents. Daily interactions such as storytelling, discussions, and joking can be effective ways to strengthen language understanding and use. Communities can also revive culturally-based activities such as traditional games, Mandailing language recitation, or traditional groups that actively use Mandailing. This step helps restore the social function of Mandailing in everyday life and strengthens ethnic identity.

2. For local government

Regional governments are expected to develop formal language revitalization programs. These programs could include establishing Mandailing language learning centers, publishing bilingual textbooks, providing regional language research scholarships, and using Mandailing at official regional events. The government can also utilize radio and digital platforms to broadcast content in Mandailing. Language awareness campaigns through billboards, public service

announcements, or cultural festivals are also essential to foster collective pride in the regional language.

3. For further researchers

Further research is recommended in other Mandailing regions, both rural and urban, to examine the broader variations in language change. Furthermore, digital domains such as social media need to be analyzed, as they are the primary communication space for the younger generation. Analysis of online conversations, patterns of slang term adoption, and the frequency of Mandailing language use on digital platforms can provide a more accurate picture of the direction of future language change.

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