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KINSHIP RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MANDAILING AND TOBA LANGUAGES: A COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC STUDY

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to analyze the kinship between Mandailing and Toba languages through a comparative historical linguistics approach. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method by collecting basic vocabulary data from semantic categories such as body parts, numbers, and natural terms. Lexicostatistics techniques are applied to measure the level of vocabulary similarity, while phonological analysis is carried out to identify sound change patterns. The results of the study indicate that the level of basic vocabulary similarity between Mandailing and Toba languages reaches **65% to 70%**, indicating a close genealogical relationship. Mandailing tends to maintain conservative forms, while Toba shows more innovation in sound patterns and vocabulary structures. Sound change processes such as syncope and assimilation are found as common patterns in the evolution of both languages. Differences in vocabulary and phonological patterns reflect the influence of geographical isolation and cultural interaction, such as the influence of Malay on Mandailing and Batak customs on Toba. This study concludes that Mandailing and Toba have the same linguistic roots in the Austronesian family, but have developed into separate linguistic systems due to the socio-cultural dynamics of their speaking communities. This study provides an important contribution to the study of language kinship in Indonesia and the preservation of regional languages as cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in recording the history of a society. Through language, traces of cultural interaction, migration, and the development of civilization can be traced. In the context of historical linguistics, the kinship relationship between languages is an interesting object of research because it can provide in-depth insight into the origins of language, the process of change that occurs, and its relationship to the community groups that speak it. Mandailing and Toba, two languages used by the Batak people in North Sumatra, are interesting examples of this relationship. Both come from the Austronesian language family, which is widely distributed in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, but also shows unique characteristics as a result of adaptation to the local social and cultural environment.

Geographically, speakers of Mandailing and Toba live in adjacent areas, namely the Mandailing Natal to Tapanuli areas. This kinship relationship is strengthened by similarities in aspects of culture, tradition, and ancestral history that are interrelated. However, from a linguistic perspective, these two languages have quite significant differences, both in phonological, morphological, and lexical aspects. This phenomenon raises important questions: to what extent are these two languages related, and how did the historical process shape these differences and similarities?

The study of the kinship of Mandailing and Toba languages is important because it can contribute to the understanding of linguistics, especially in the study of Nusantara languages. In the field of comparative historical linguistics, this study aims to:

1. Identify similarities and differences in the basic vocabulary of both languages.
2. Analyze the patterns of sound changes that occur.
3. Determine the level of kinship of the two languages based on the linguistic data found.

This approach uses a comparative historical method, namely by systematically comparing language elements to find evidence of genealogical relationships. In addition, this study also attempts to explore the influence of socio-cultural factors on the evolution of each language, including language contact that may have occurred between the two communities. The results of this study are expected to provide new insights into linguistic dynamics in North Sumatra, as well as become the basis for further research in the field of Austronesian languages. In addition, the results of this study can also be a means to strengthen awareness of the richness of local culture and the historical relationships that connect the Mandailing and Toba communities. This is important to maintain cultural diversity while strengthening social ties among community groups living side by side.

METHOD

This study uses a comparative historical linguistics approach to analyze the kinship between Mandailing and Toba languages. This study is qualitative descriptive, focusing on the analysis of basic vocabulary data, phonology, and morphology of both languages. Data sources consist of primary data collected from interviews with native speakers in the Mandailing Natal and Tapanuli regions, as well as secondary data obtained from written documents, such as dictionaries and related linguistic literature. Data collection was carried out through direct interviews with native speakers, observations, and documentation studies. Elicitation techniques were used to obtain translations of basic vocabulary covering semantic categories such as body parts, numbers, colors, nature, and daily activities. The data obtained were analyzed through three main stages: identifying similarities and differences in basic vocabulary, reconstructing sound change patterns, and determining the level of kinship using lexicostatistical criteria.

To ensure data validity, this study uses source triangulation by comparing data from native speakers with written sources, conducting peer reviews by linguistic experts, and cross-checking with native speakers. The study was conducted in the Mandailing Natal and Tapanuli regions involving native speakers who have pure language competence. Through this method, the research is expected to be able to identify the level of kinship between the Mandailing and Toba languages scientifically, as well as contribute to the development of historical linguistic studies, especially in the Nusantara region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study successfully identified the level of kinship between Mandailing and Toba languages through analysis of basic vocabulary, phonological patterns, and sound changes. The results of the analysis show that around ****65% to 70%**** of the basic vocabulary of both languages are similar. This similarity is mostly found in basic semantic categories, such as body parts, numbers, and natural terms. For example, the word "eye" in Mandailing and Toba is **mata**, while the word "water" is called **aek** in both languages. However, there are also some significant differences in basic vocabulary, for example the word "rain" is called **udon** in Mandailing, while in Toba it is **udan**. In addition, the word "makan" in Mandailing is **manangih**, while in Toba it is **mangan**. These differences reflect the existence of local innovations that have developed in each language, which are influenced by the geographical environment and culture of its speakers. In terms of sound change patterns, several linguistic processes were found that were consistent between the two languages. One of the most prominent patterns is syncope, which is the loss of the middle vowel in certain words. For example, the word **udon** in Mandailing changes to **udan** in Toba. Another pattern is sound assimilation, such as in the word **manangih** (Mandailing) which changes to **mangan** (Toba).

Mandailing tends to maintain a more conservative vocabulary form, while Toba shows more innovation in its phonological patterns. This innovation involves simplifying word structures and adapting to pronunciation patterns that are more in line with the local dialect. This difference provides an idea of how the two languages developed separately despite coming from the same ancestor. In addition, the analysis shows that Mandailing and Toba have different socio-cultural influences in their development. Mandailing tends to be

influenced by interaction with Malay culture, which can be seen from several loan words and softer pronunciation patterns. In contrast, Toba reflects adaptation to the distinctive Batak culture, including in its vocabulary structure and more dynamic sound patterns. In terms of kinship, lexicostatistical analysis shows that Mandailing and Toba languages have a close relationship. The level of similarity in basic vocabulary reaching 65% to 70% places both in the category of languages that originate from the same ancestor, but have experienced quite significant divergence. This relationship is in line with the theory of historical linguistics which states that languages that have the same origin will show similarities in basic structure, even though they develop into different linguistic systems.

Discussion

The results of this study strengthen the hypothesis that Mandailing and Toba languages originate from the same ancestor in the Austronesian language family. The similarity in basic vocabulary and phonological patterns indicates a strong genealogical relationship between the two languages. However, the differences found reflect a divergence process influenced by geographical, social, and cultural factors. The Mandailing language, which is more conservative in its vocabulary, reflects a lower level of cultural interaction with outsiders. This may be due to the geographical position of the Mandailing community which is relatively more isolated compared to the Toba community. As a result, the vocabulary and sound patterns of the Mandailing language are closer to their original form. In contrast, the Toba language shows more innovation in its sound patterns and vocabulary. This can be attributed to more intense interaction with outside cultures as well as the internal dynamics of the Toba community, which is more open to change. For example, the process of simplifying phonological structures such as in the word *manangih* to *mangan* reflects adaptation to the need for more efficient communication.

Differences in sound change patterns also reflect the cultural adaptation of each community. The Mandailing language, with Malay influences, shows a more refined and structured pronunciation pattern. Meanwhile, the Toba language, which is influenced by Batak culture, shows a stronger and more dynamic pattern, reflecting the more expressive characteristics of the Toba culture. The degree of kinship of the two languages shows that although they come from the same ancestor, both have developed into stand-alone languages with their own characteristics. This provides evidence that language is a dynamic entity, which continues to change along with the social and cultural changes of its speaking community. From a historical linguistics perspective, these findings provide an important contribution to the understanding of how the languages of North Sumatra developed. The relationship between Mandailing and Toba languages reflects the broader dynamics of the evolution of Austronesian languages in the Indonesian region.

Culturally, the results of this study also underscore the importance of understanding the historical relationship between the Mandailing and Toba communities. The similarities in their languages reflect common cultural roots, while the differences reflect unique adaptations to their respective environments and cultures. This shows how language can be a reflection of the historical journey and cultural identity of a community. The findings of this study are expected to encourage further studies on the kinship of languages in Indonesia, especially in areas with high cultural diversity such as North Sumatra. In addition, these results can also be the basis for efforts to preserve regional languages, which are an important part of Indonesia's cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

Mandailing and Toba languages are a reflection of the historical and cultural journey of the Mandailing and Toba peoples. The similarities and differences between the two reveal not only linguistic relationships, but also the socio-cultural dynamics that shape their communities. This study provides an important contribution to understanding the kinship of regional languages in Indonesia, while also underlining the importance of preserving regional languages as part of the cultural richness of the archipelago.

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