

Revitalization Model for Toba Batak's Cultural Vocabularies in Tano Batak

Junita Friska

Amrin Saragih

Universitas Negeri Medan

Jl. Willem Iskandar Pasar V Medan Estate, Medan--Sumatera Utara
Indonesia

Robert Sibarani

Dwi Widayati

Post-graduate Department of Linguistics

Faculty of Cultural Sciences University of Sumatera Utara
Jl. dr. Mansoer No. 1 Medan-20155 Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Abstract

Tano Batak becomes the conceptual term referring to homeland of Batak people which literally means 'Batak land' and this covers four regencies, for example, North Tapanuli, Toba Samosir, Samosir, and Humbang Hasundutan; all of those regencies are administratively under the North Sumatera Province (Indonesia). The extinction of Batak Toba language could not be denied, so that it needs to be revitalized. The revitalization of Batak Toba vocabularies is mainly concerned with reactivation, management, and with cultural vocabulary. Those three elements can not be separated from the role of positive language attitudes, usage, vocabularies and understanding of their functions.

Keywords: revitalization, Toba Batak, Tano Batak, cultural vocabulary, model

1. Introduction

The extinction of Toba Batak language (TBL) can not be denied, so this language needs to be revitalized especially in its vocabularies which correlate to the cycle of life as it is proposed by Genep (1960; 3) who argues that the transition from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, marriage, and death. Grenoble and Whaley (2006:20) have proposed a language revitalization programme which is based on *bottom-up* principle. This principle depends very much on the actors or the government officials who are involved in the programme.

2. Review of Related Literature

Language revitalization (LR) in this article refers to efforts how to make TBL important even though it is considered unimportant to some speakers. Sibarani (2004:30) says "cultural revitalization is a process and efforts of maximizing culture in society life or effort to make culture become something important in society." He also argues that LR is important because culture affects people language capacity. Sibarani (1992:110) stresses that "language is also transmitted culturally" meaning, language capacity is transmitted from one generation to other through learning process but not through generics.

The writer thinks LR can be defined as a process and efforts to make language having significant role in communication. Even, mother language is considered as ethnic identity which is different from others. Dicker in Samovar (2010:416) believes that mother language as the origin language is very important because it is a seed of identity to someone. Language helps an individual creating identity which binds him/her into his/her community and in the same time it makes him/her different from other communities.

The revitalization of Toba Batak (TB) can not be separated from TB's culture. The relation between language and culture is a symbiosis. Samovar et.al. (2010:273) says "human culture would not progress and could not be considered existing without language." Then, language and culture cooperate each other in their symbiosis relation; each of them gets profit. To have a culture means to possess a language; with language, members of community might share their trust, value, attitude which are used as communal efforts. Since culture is needed in personal setting, and this setting is different from a compact community, so language is thought to be possible to build a trust, value, attitude among community members.

TBL's revitalization is based on the concept of relation of symbiosis between language and culture. The symbiosis concept between them is communicated by Carolle in Samovar (2010:275) as saying "as long as language is different in symbolizing an objective experience, language user chooses inclinely and differ the experience differently according to their language category." Therefore, the TBL's revitalization in this research is focused on the relation between language and culture.

King (2001:3) argued that language revitalization concept means a friction of language in social life. Therefore, before revitalizing a language, it is needed to consider the maintenance process of language, loss of language, and language death. This is related to the effort of documentation as a model of revitalization, especially to know the ethnography of communication about the nature of society from the use of language. The language revitalization has an internationally legal intention. UNESCO proposed that language revitalization refers to giving a focus on language vitality (see figure 1) which has been corrected in a symposium held in Kyoto (Japan) in November 2002. UNESCO identifies the following nine determinants that endanger the vitality of language so that a language should be revitalized systemically.

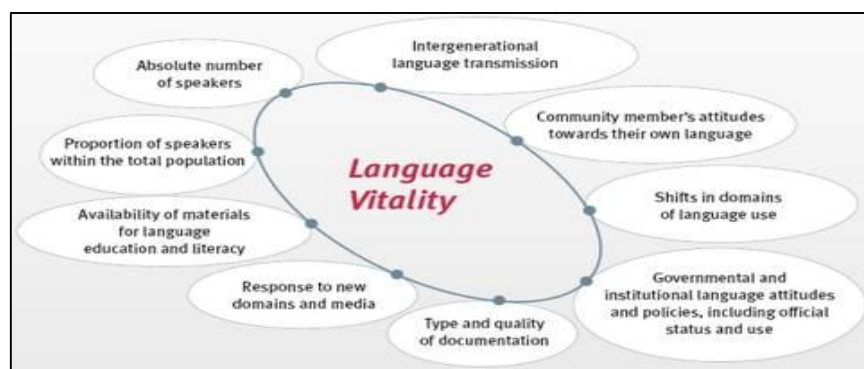


Figure 1. Determinants of Language Vitality

(Source: UNESCO World Report, 2009:77)

Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 18) argued that language threat is based on the following six categories:

1. *Safe*: A language is considered safe when all generations use language in all or nearly all aspects of language. This situation is not only defined a large population but also the function of language as government, education, and trade.
2. *Risk*: A language is at risk when (what is learned and used by people of all different age groups) the speakers are increasingly limited. The language is spoken in a limited number of domains or have a small number of speakers of other languages in the same area.
3. *Missing*: A language disappears when there is a shift of language in society. Overall, the decline in intergenerational transfers and speaker's base is shrinking.
4. *Dying*: A language is declared nearly dead when the narrative language is not passed on to the children.
5. *Nearly Extinct*: A language can be considered endangered when there are only several speakers from the remains of the oldest generation.
6. *Extinct*: A language is declared extinct if no speakers left.

Categorically, Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 22) proposed two levels of language revitalization, for example, macro and micro levels. The macro level is addressed to circumstances and policies for national or even transnational level. This level might include the government support for local language, the national planning for language and education, and for attitudes toward bilingualism.

Conversely, the micro level involves demography, attitudes, cultural practices, and the state of local speech community. Several questions are posed at the micro level, such as: Is the speech community members living close to each other? Is there a formal education, if any, in education available? Is relatively homogeneous society in language and ethnicity economical?

Macro variables for language revitalization consists of three levels: extranational, national and regional levels.

1. Extra-national level

At this level, Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 22-23) argued that globalization is not just for the global spread of a single language, for example English, but also to refer specifically to the integration of economic life around the world. This integration requires greater economic cooperation and a more efficient transportation network between countries and thus requires rapid communication and not expensive. As a result, we see the emergence access for international languages, such as English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Arabic that serves as a lingua franca in the international financial system, manufacturing, and commercial exchange. National and local governments around the world are to promote their local languages and individuals/families often make decisions about the language spoken at home, or about the choice of language in schools. Language revitalization program at extranational level might be viewed as competition by promoting ethnic language or the local language in the face of the dominance of the international language.

2. National level

Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 25-26) also argued that the language policy composed by government could give an important influence in geopolitical construct. It is relevant to the development of language revitalization program at the national level consisting of language policy, language attitudes, education policy, regional autonomy, and federal support.

a. *Language policy.* Language policy could shape patterns of language use in various domains of language, such as, courts, schools, and offices. This policy has a direct impact on the vitality of ethnic languages that require linguistic arrangements that do not threaten the extinction of ethnic languages.

b. *Language attitude.* The attitude of the language is being targeted in the revitalization with regards to the context of multilingualism leading to the globalization of foreign languages. Globalizing English, for example, is supported by translation costs, school curriculum development, teacher training bilingual and multilingual provision of legal services. Language revitalization in this context is likely to be opposed by various constituents to the achievement of fluency in English. Therefore, constructing the speakers' positive attitude is necessary in the language revitalisation.

c. *Education Policy.* Educational policy is based on the language policy and gesture language, particularly on the challenges faced in the ethnic language revitalization efforts.

d. *Regional autonomy.* Autonomous region has an important role in the revitalization of the language as it relates to the history, geography, main principles of political, economic factors, although in exceptional cases this may be determined by extranational factors.

e. *Federal support.* Federal government support becomes a key variable in the funding of language revitalization.

3. Regional level

Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 35-36) have proposed that the regional level is defined geographically. In this case there are two variables that need to be considered in language revitalization, such as, the role of regional languages and density languages.

a. *Regional languages.* Domains of language use varies in individual situations. Usually, the national language is the language of higher education, law, and government, while the language used in the areas of trade and education levels are lower. Ethnic languages are used for informal social interaction, as well as cultural practices, such as religious rituals and ceremonies. In some cases, ethnic languages can only be used in the home, in the village, and between adjacent villages.

b. *Language density.* Language density and multilingualism (or monolingual) have a significant impact on the vitality of language and gesture language. In a simple level, in an area with a high density of language, people are more likely to be multilingual and more likely to have positive attitudes towards multilingualism. Conversely, in areas with low-density languages, monolingualisnya will be heavily promoted as a national policy.

The micro variables for language revitalization consist of language attitudes, human resources, religion, literacy, and financial resources as stated by Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 38-45).

- a. *Language Attitude*. This plays an important role in the local level. Positive attitude towards the ethnic languages helps maintaining the vitality of language and determine the success of the language revitalization. Language attitude modernizes the ethnic worries that the language barriers would limit employment opportunities and education. Conversely, traditional people's worry about the loss of ethnic languages will eliminate eroding identity and community solidarity.
- b. *Human Resources*. This is determined by the number of people and skills of language speakers that can be brought to language revitalization project. Therefore, a revitalization program must be begun by an honest assessment of human resources, especially the speakers that play an important role in the vitality of the language, both for teaching language and to help create a new domain for use.
- c. *Religion*. It is often overlooked in the discussions about language revitalization. The ironic fact is that in religious ceremonies and cultural activities the spiritual values are often used as the last domain, therefore, ethnic languages are threatened with extinction. Micro variable is based on a correlation between people who maintain traditional beliefs and religious practices and people who maintain the language and traditional culture.
- d. *Literacy*. In every community there is a proficiency with the ability to read or not. The revitalization of community literacy can be seen from the positive benefits and from the development of community identity. Then, literacy can be seen as a source of pride to read and write in the language of ethnic broader communication.
- e. *Financial Resources*. These are determined by the economic welfare of society so they can help determining whether members of the public in a position to engage or not to engage in language revitalization. Theoretically, the revitalization of the language is not concerned with financial resources but, realistically, it is easier to start a program if money is available for education, to produce and disseminate materials, and pay for various facilities and infrastructure revitalization of the language.

Language revitalization can be carried out by seven models as proposed by Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 51-68), such as, total-immersion programs, partial-immersion or bilingual programs, the local language as a second, "foreign" language, community-based programs, master-apprentice program, language reclamation models, and documentation as revitalization.

- a. *Total-immersion programs*. Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 51-52) thought that these programs are determined by three key elements: (i) better program that suits the local people who still have some native speakers to create a linguistic environment, (ii) the extensive advocacy and community support so that people not only need to work to create an environment to speak but also to maintain it, and (iii) the adequacy of financial resources.
- b. *Partial-immersion or bilingual programs*. This model is part of the total engagement program in language revitalization program. The success of this model relies on intergenerational language transmission, from the older generation to the younger one, especially school students.
- c. *The local language as a second, "foreign" language*. This program is based on the fact that extinction of ethnic languages means there is no native speakers.
- d. *Community-based programs*. This model is based on the appearance of informal education or learning nature. Community-based program that is developed within the framework of learning styles focuses on the domain of language use rather than teaching grammar. The advantage of community-based programs is automatically to resolve the problem which creates a domain to use the local language.
- e. *Master-apprentice program*. Five main principles underlying this program are (1) the use of the English language is not permitted in the interaction between the owner and interns; (2) interns should involve full participants in determining the content of the program and in ensuring the use of the target language; (3) the use of the preferred spoken language in learning and communicating; (4) learning takes place not in the classroom, but in real life situations; and (5) the understanding comes in conjunction with nonverbal communication.
- f. *Language reclamation models*. This model refers to the resurrection or reclamation language no longer spoken and no longer have a native speaker so that one is forced to rely on any documentation relating to the language reclaimed.

- g. *Documentation as revitalization.* This model has an important role for language reclamation and revitalization in the future. Field researchers collect a variety of information, including the pragmatics and paralinguistics, to give future generations an idea about their ethnic languages. Therefore, many revitalization efforts begin with language documentation spoken by the people and the knowledge of the speakers. Documentation model as well as revitalization is what will be applied in this study.

3. Research Method

This research primarily uses qualitative and quantitative approaches. Brannen (1997) states that the integration of these two approaches is aimed at minimizing triangulation refraction to establish research and data collection. The validity of the findings and levels of confidence will be enhanced by the use of more than one approach. Therefore, in order to support the primary data, secondary data is also used. Primary data is related to the data from language user identity derived from the sample; meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from informants, and written sources.

Based on qualitative and quantitative approaches, this research uses ethnomethodology and the comparative method. A qualitative approach is based on ethnomethodology by investigation to the typical behaviors of communication, and the patterns of communication in the sociocultural context. Therefore, Bungin (2007: 45) argued that the ethnographic method is very concerned with the analysis of conversations as well as the indexical expressions that appear in the level of interaction. This is in accordance with what Kuswano (2008: 37) stated that "the first step to describe and analyze patterns of communication that exist in a society is to identify the events that occur in repeated communication. The next step involves inventory of components in the communication events, and the relationships between components."

Ethnography is an amalgamation of linguistic communication and cultural anthropology, which focuses on the study of language communities. Hymes in Ohoiwutun (2007: 37-38) defines the language communities (speech community) as people who have knowledge of the rules or rules for the occurrence and interpretation of a language. These include the joint ownership of the knowledge of at least one form of language and the patterns of language usage. Language communities share linguistic forms, rules governing the system of shared language, and cultural concepts.

Kuswano (2008: 9) argued that the relationship of language, communication, and culture gave birth the hypothesis of linguistic relativity as proposed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. These two linguists stated that "the structure of language or rules about a culture will determine the attitude and mindset of the culture." This hypothesis is strengthened by the ethnographic view.

The focus of the ethnography of communication in this study is carried out through qualitative approach, which is based on observations and open interviews. The aim is to provide a global understanding of the views and values of the culture of a society as a way to explain the attitudes and behavior of the society. This is done to seek data that is connected with the use of language, the purpose of the use of language, language usage in situations, and the meaning of the language in all aspects.

In the context of ethnography, Spradley (2007: 61-312) formulated the objectives and basic concepts of achieving goals the ethnographers should do. Such activity is named "Flow Research Advanced Staged" (The Developmental Research Sequence) consisting of 12 steps: (i) assign informant, (ii) interview informant, (iii) create ethnographic notes, (iv) ask for descriptive questions, (v) analyze the interview, (vi) create analysis domain, (vii) make the structural questions, (viii) create taxonomic analysis, (ix) create contrasts, (x) create component analysis, (xi) look for the cultural themes, and (xii) write the ethnographic report.

4. Results and Discussion

The use of TBL and its cultural vocabularies are necessary right now. TBL's preservation is related to how often the language is used in communication. The applicability of the vocabularies in TBL is be closely linked to the preservation of the TBL. Thus, the language attitudes, language use, and retention of language should be preserved and should be revitalized because the vocabularies are endangered to extinct. Positive language attitude towards local language means to reactivate the TBL's vocabularies. Reactivation can be done by using the language in everyday life both in oral and written communication. The TBL is almost extinct so this language should be reactivated in order the survival of this local language is maintained. The TBL has a positive attitude.

The activation of the TBL's script in school has been campaigned. This shows the TBL's native speakers care for their language.

The model of revitalization in TBL's vocabularies can be seen in Appendix 1. Positive language attitude is a person's attitude towards the language and this becomes the native speakers' pride in the TBL because they have been using such a language in everyday communication. Today, the TBL's society has lost their pride in using it. The young generation communicates by using Indonesian in the family. TBL's society in interaction feels reluctant to speak the TBL.

5. Conclusion

Toba Batak language vocabulary has an important role in the preservation of language Batak Toba. Vocabulary retention is something that must be maintained to ensure the preservation of the Toba language. Toba Batak language requires a retention because many Indonesian and foreign interferences are included in the public communication in TBL. For example, the words *dang huripmpu* TBL is often replaced with word *dang husangka* 'I never thought.' Cultural vocabularies should be revitalized because these are rarely used. The use of these vocabularies is only related to *adat* events so this TBL is in danger to diminish. Decreasing the use of TBL's vocabularies is bad for younger speakers in Toba Batak. Of 145 vocabularies there are 12 archaic words (equivalent to 17.4%). If those vocabularies are not revitalized, the possibility of extinction will happen as soon as possible.

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Appendix 1: Revitalization model of cultural vocabularies in TBL

