

# The Existence of Malay Language in The Flow of Modernization in Medan City

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## **The Existence of Malay Language in The Flow of Modernization in Medan City**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The early history of Medan can not be separated from the existence of ethnic Malay. But the existence of Malay ethnic groups in the city of Medan continues to be eroded in the dynamics of modernism-based development. This can be seen from the existence of the use of Malay language in Medan City which is increasingly inaudible. The Development of Modernization Flow and Establishment of Medan as a Metropolitan City assumed as one of the factors causing the loss of Malay language existence in the city of Medan. Therefore, this paper aims to explain how the existence of Malay language in the flow of modernization in the city of Medan. This research method uses a literature study approach and field observations with several informants from a Malay family who settled in Medan City. The results showed that first, some Malay families living in Medan City no longer use Malay in their daily activities. Secondly, there is no support from outside parties such as the government and Malay traditional institutions. Especially in socializing the use of language in several public activities or at least include Malay language in local content subjects in schools in the city of Medan.

**Keywords:** *the existence of malay language and modernization of medan city*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The historical development of Medan City cannot be separated from ethnic Malay. As a metropolitan city, Medan City has a long history. Starting from a village that was founded by Guru Patimpus between the confluence of the Deli River and the Babura River (BPS Kota Medan, 2019). In 1632, the City of Medan became the seat of government of the Sultanate of Deli, which is a Malay Kingdom. Europeans began to discover the city of Medan since the arrival of John Anderson from England in 1823. Civilization in Medan continues to grow until the Dutch East Indies government gave the status of the city and made it the seat of government of the East Sumatra Residency. Entering the 20th century, Medan became an important city outside of Java, especially after the colonial government opened a large-scale plantation company (Sumarno, 2016).

The opening of plantation companies by the colonial government causing a massive migration to the city of Medan. There are at least two waves of migration to Medan, namely; the first stage was marked by the arrival of Chinese and Javanese people as a plantation laborer. However, this repair did not go smoothly, because in 1880 the plantation company decided to no longer bring Chinese people because it is considered frequent riots and run away from the plantation. In the second stage, the city of Medan began the arrival of migration groups from Minangkabau, Mandailing and Aceh.

This group did not come to Medan to work as plantation laborers but to become traders, teachers and scholars (Adya, 2014; Lumbantoruan dkk, 2017).

Post-colonialism, precisely after entering the millennium era, Medan City continues to experience fairly rapid development. The current of global modernization is a color in the dynamics of the development of Medan City which at that time was declared by Medan Mayor Abdillah as a Metropolitan City. The choice to make Medan a metropolitan city has an impact at the presence of various modernization instruments such as the establishment of malls, plazas, five-star hotels, restaurants, which directly became the production media for the growth of modern culture. Other than that, to become a metropolitan requires a city to replace local-traditional culture into modern-global culture. Traditional and total values are replaced by modern structures and values.

From the dynamics of development in the city of Medan, making Medan a city that has an important contribution to national development. Because all this time, Medan is known as the economic gateway to the western part of Indonesia. As a city that is the center of economic growth, can't not, Medan is a place for many groups of migrants who want to find work and live in the city of Medan. That is why, Medan City then turned into a multiethnic city which is inhabited by many ethnicities starting from Java, Batak, Chinese, Mandailing, Minangkabau and Aceh. Based on reports compiled from various references, until the 2000s, the highest number of tribes in Medan is Java 33.03 percent, Batak 20.93 percent, Chinese 10.65 percent, Mandailing 9.36 percent, Minangkabau 8.6 percent and Malay 6.59 percent and followed by several other tribes such as Karo 4.10 percent and Aceh 2.78 percent.

The small ethnic Malay population, coupled with the current modernization in the development of Medan City made the research team interested in researching the existence of Malay culture in Medan. To see the existence of the Malay culture, the research team chose to look at one element of culture namely language. Therefore, this research paper will raise the title; The Existence of Malay Language in the Flow of Modernization in Medan City. The formulation of the problems that will be answered in this research paper are: How is the Existence of Malay Language in the Flow of Modernization in Medan City?

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted with a literature study approach and field observations by observing several informants from a Malay family who settled in Medan City. Both of these approaches were deliberately chosen in order to give an idea about the existence of Malay language in the flow of modernization in Medan City. The data that has been collected is then analyzed with interactive approach to the qualitative model as proposed by Miles dan Huberman, which consists of three main things: data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions or verification. The whole process is one that is interwoven at the time before, during and after data collection (Idrus, 2009).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Culture or culture can be interpreted as the result of human creative work in the form of ideology, technology, literature, art, livelihood and language. Therefore, linking cultural studies by choosing language as its object becomes an interesting thing. Malay language itself can be categorized into branches of the archipelago languages which has many types, there are at least 200 to 300 languages. Forms of Malay Language in ancient times were recognized as Ancient Malay and far different from modern Malay. The ancient Malay language form can only be seen through the impression of a historical heritage like stained stones (Rachman, 2017).

Current modernization brought in the development process in the city of Medan in essence brings a very real change to the existence of culture. In various research results as stated by Mubah, (2011) Suneki (2012), Nasution, (2017) and Suradi, (2018) modernization does have an influence on the loss of local cultures of people in one region. Especially if, the level of cultural homogeneity in one region is quite high. Development based on modernization has indeed become part of the socio-cultural change effort in the community. According to Soekanto (1999), the factors driving the process of social change are; (1) Contact with other cultures, (2) An advanced formal education system, (3) An attitude of respecting one's work and advanced desires, (4) An open system of society, (5) Heterogeneous population, (6) Society dissatisfaction with certain areas of life, (7) Orientation to the future, (8) Value that humans must always endeavor to improve their lives.

The eight factors driving social change occur almost entirely in the history and dynamics of development in the city of Medan. For example in the context of contact with other cultures, Medan as a city with a very strategic geographical position and located on the east coast of Sumatra is very open with all forms of culture that enter from the trade route and from the path of spreading religion (da'wah). In today's modern era, Medan has Belawan Port as one of the major ports in the Sumatra region and also Kuala Namu Airport as the second largest airport in Indonesia. For example, open layers of society make a lot of people –especially those with ethnic ethnicity –very easy to accept changes. Open systems of society are also supported by heterogeneous populations.

In Medan, the heterogeneity of its population can be seen in the many ethnicities or ethnic groups of Indonesia who occupy this city. The effect of the heterogeneity of the population in Medan makes there is no culture of any ethnicity who wins this city. Usman Pelly, an anthropologist from Universitas Negeri Medan (Unimed) said Malay as the native ethnic in Medan City was not a tribe that dominated Medan City. Likewise with the Javanese, despite being the majority in Medan City, it still cannot dominate this city. So according to Pelly, there is no single ethnic group that dominates the city of Medan. This is because there are three factors to dominate the culture of one city, namely; demographics, economy and local culture. These three factors are not all controlled by one ethnicity. For example ethnic Javanese as the most populous, but economic domination was controlled by ethnic Chinese, while the local culture is still held by the Malays (Muhardiansyah, 2015).

The picture above shows that the current modernization, especially in the development process in the city of Medan have a real impact on socio-cultural change. Moreover, almost all instruments supporting socio-cultural change is in the Medan City community institutions. Therefore, modernization and heterogeneous forms of society make the process of cultural assimilation in the midst of Medan City society the faster it happens. The most felt impact of this process is began to reduce the use of ethnic native language speech. For example, in the ethnic Malay in conversation in public spaces and in the family the use of Malay is no longer used. This condition should be an important concern for the community and Malay Customary stakeholders in Medan City. Therefore, language is a cultural identity that can become extinct if it is not preserved.

Adisaputera (2010) said language shifts or changes can occur **if a community collectively abandons language completely and choose another language**. A protracted language shift will have an impact on language extinction. Adisaputera (2009) in his research results showed a shift in the use of Langkat Malay to Indonesian in the youth community. This is marked by several things, namely: (1) about the Potential of Language Extinction in the Langkat Malay Community in Stabat, Langkat

Regency, North Sumatra found several things that indicate the extinction of Malay language in the City of Stabat, namely; (1) The high use of Indonesian in daily communication interactions (20%) even in the dominant Malay region. (2) Nearly 50% of respondents (47.4%) stated that their Indonesian was not Langkat Malay. (3) Percentage of respondents who did not understand and were not fluent in Langkat Malay (64.8%) almost twice the percentage of respondents who understood and fluently used Langkat Malay (35.2%). (4) Of the 52.6% who have mastered Malay Langkat since they are proficient in language, only 33.9% understand and use it smoothly. Language shifts that occur in the youth community in the City of Stabat leads to language extinction. In criterion of endangered language, then Langkat Malay is in a potentially endangered condition. There are two indicators as well as facts and language shift data revealed for this, namely the heavy pressure of a larger language namely Indonesian and the beginning of the loss of children's speakers.

Generally, the concept of language extinction has been explained by Dressler (1992) which says there are two presuppositions that can cause language extinction namely; *first*, bilingualism or multiplicity. *Second*, there is a shift in language due to dominant pressure. This language shift is interpreted as a gradual transition (up to the realm of use) from a bachelor unstable until finally becoming a ekabahasaan. According to Dressler, it is as a result of this transition that language extinction or death can occur. The conditions described by Dressler (1992) and Adisaputera (2009) also occur in the use of Malay in Medan. This is because the supporting ecosystem for the development of Malay Language is no longer able to socialize the use of Malay, especially to the younger generation.

The most basic ecosystem in the process of Malay Language socialization is family. Families that have social and maintenance functions failed to provide socialization related to norms and values in the family. Even though the family should introduce and deliver cultural values to a child which includes language, arts and customs. A research informant named Muadzir said that in his family the use of Malay was almost non-existent in everyday conversation in the family environment. Yet according to him, almost every year their family returns to their hometown in Tanjung Pura, Langkat Regency.

“We at home don't use Malay in everyday conversation. If anything, which is used by children only for speech invocation of kinship systems such as calling Wak Yong, Wak Ngah or Wak Andak which was indicated as a call to their brothers and sisters.” (Results of an interview with Muadzir, Medan Amplas Citizen)

The loss of Malay in everyday conversations in the family environment is also due to the absence of inheritance or strong regeneration related to the use of Malay in their previous families. Thus, children or young people in the family are not accustomed to using Malay. This condition is exacerbated by the carrying capacity of the social environment which is not the majority of the Malay Community. So there is a reluctance to use Malay in everyday social interactions. A research informant named Mazian said this:

“In our neighborhood, there is no dominant tribe. Everything is mixed, so everyday conversation tends to use Indonesian. Even if someone uses local languages, we only hear it once or twice, for example fellow Javanese or fellow Batak people. And usually that, the conversation is

more confidential or related to kinship." (Interview with Mazian, Medan City Residents)

The loss of Malay in everyday conversation in the family environment and in the midst of society increasingly aggravated by the absence of local political policies which supports the effort of preserving Malay as the local identity language of the people of Medan City. For example, Malay has not become material for local content in schools in the city of Medan. Whereas in some regencies / cities, the native language is a subject of local content. Because, according to Nahak (2019) the giving of learning materials in Malay to classes in schools is part of what is called culture knowledge. In addition, the Malay Language has not been able to become characteristic in public dialogues in Medan City. For example, the use of the word "Ahoi" is still inferior to the use of the word "Horas". Likewise with the use of rhymes which is a characteristic Malay which is rarely heard at every opening of public events in the city of Medan.

### CONCLUSION

In the discussion above, it can be concluded that Malay Language is unable to show its existence in the current modernization in Medan City. This is due to the large number of migrants or groups of migrants residing in the city of Medan and the number is increasing and making people Malay is no longer a dominant society. This condition is then made many Malay people began to be reluctant to use Malay in everyday conversation both in the social environment and in the family. Almost all informants from the Malay families we interviewed said that they used Indonesian more in their daily conversations.

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