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Sound Changes in the Haloban Language of the Banyak Islands, Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract

Sound change is a universal phenomenon and is strongly influenced by contextual factors. Variant sounds that appear as cognates across languages can be identified and explained through linguistic analysis within a cultural framework. This study aims to identify sound changes in the Haloban language by comparing them with a related language spoken on Simeulue Island, the Defayan language. A qualitative method was employed in this research. Data were collected through recordings of Halobanese wordlist utterances and interviews with native Halobanese speakers. Six informants participated in the study, comprising three male and three female native speakers. Data collection involved documentation techniques, including recording, transcription, and translation into both Indonesian and English. The data were analyzed for regular and semi-regular (sporadic) sound changes between Proto-Austronesian (PAN) and Haloban. The Haloban language is spoken in only two villages in the Pulau Banyak District, Aceh Singkil Regency, Aceh Province. The results showed a regular sound change in which the PAN sound /b/ becomes /w/ in Haloban. Semi-regular changes included sound loss, addition, fusion, and unpacking. In comparison with the Defayan language, two regular sound changes

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were identified in Haloban: /b/ and /f/ becoming /w/. These sound changes contribute to the linguistic identity of the Halobanese people.

Keywords: Austronesian languages, comparative linguistics, Haloban language, phonological variation, sound change.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kepulauan Banyak, also known as Pulau Banyak (Banyak Islands), is located in the westernmost part of Aceh Province, Indonesia. The archipelago consists of 63 islands, though only a few are inhabited. The Haloban language is spoken in only two villages: Haloban and Asantola, both located on the largest island in the group, Tuangku Island. Since 2010, Tuangku Island has been included in the Pulau Banyak Barat District. This district consists of four villages: Haloban, Asantola, Suka Makmur, and Ujung Sialit. The residents of Haloban and Asantola are Muslims and are known as Halobanese. In contrast, Ujung Sialit is inhabited by Niasnese immigrants, all of whom are Christian, while Suka Makmur is home to Muslim Niasnese. Residents across the island primarily use Indonesian and Aneuk Jamee. Aneuk Jamee is a dialect of Minangkabau used in the Aceh region and serves as the lingua franca on Simeulue Island (Aziz & Amery, 2016; Lubis, Sibarani et al., 2024).

The Haloban language is considered severely endangered, as it is primarily spoken by the elder generation. The language has undergone a shift, with younger generations increasingly using Aneuk Jamee and Indonesian when communicating, especially with children (Lubis & Williams, 2019). Haloban children tend to acquire their heritage language only passively, through observation of their parents rather than direct instruction. As Oswalt (1986, as cited in Duranti, 1997) states, children typically acquire culture and language through observation, imitation, and trial-and-error. Although some children understand Haloban due to exposure at home, they rarely use it actively. In one recorded context, three young Halobanese (aged 15–25) attempted to use the language with older speakers but reported difficulties, particularly due to a lack of vocabulary and knowledge of affixes (Andriany et al., 2022).

Sound change refers to phonological transitions that occur based on contextual factors. In the Indonesian context, sound changes are often studied through comparative linguistics to trace language kinship and estimate the time of separation from Proto-Austronesian (PAN). Previous studies on the Haloban language have focused on language kinship using lexicostatistical techniques and surveys on lexical similarities with other regional languages (Gayo et al., 2018; Syarifuddin & Widayati, 2018). These studies show that the Haloban language shares similarities with languages spoken on the mainland and nearby barrier islands.

However, no prior research has specifically examined the sound changes in the Haloban language or the reasons for these changes. Therefore, this study aims to describe the sound changes between PAN and Haloban, particularly in comparison with languages on Simeulue Island, and to explore why these changes occur. The phenomenon of sound change is analyzed through both linguistic and contextual lenses.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Proto-Austronesian (PAN) Language

Proto-Austronesian (PAN) is one of the most widely distributed language families in the world, with speakers stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean, including regions as far apart as the coast of Africa, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hawaii, Easter Island, and New Zealand (Adelaar, 2004). PAN refers to a reconstructed ancestral language from which many Austronesian languages are believed to have descended, originally spoken in mainland Asia.

Understanding the origins and evolution of Proto-Austronesian (PAN) is essential not only for historical linguistics but also for tracing the cultural and migratory patterns of its speakers across vast geographic areas. As scholars attempt to uncover how PAN diversified into the many Austronesian languages spoken today, the study of language kinship becomes a crucial analytical framework. This branch of comparative linguistics helps reveal genetic relationships among languages and provides insights into historical language change, contact, and diffusion. According to Keraf (1978, 1996), language kinship studies serve several interconnected purposes. In the original reference by Keraf (1978, 1996), the objectives of language kinship were not consistently numbered, which may lead to ambiguity in citation or interpretation. For clarity and coherence in this study, the points have been organized into six clearly defined objectives:

1. Identifying related languages based on shared features in phonology, morphology, and syntax.
2. Reconstructing descendant languages to trace them back to their proto-languages.
3. Classifying languages into subgroups within a language family.
4. Comparing typological features to develop classifications based on similarities.
5. Determining the center of distribution of proto-languages and the migration paths of their speakers.
6. Investigating influences from unrelated neighboring languages, especially in the areas of phonology, morphology, and syntax.

In Aceh Province, which forms part of the Sumatra Island group, several languages are spoken depending on the region. The Acehnese language is primarily spoken in the eastern part of the province, including areas such as Banda Aceh, Lhokseumawe, Langsa, Meulaboh, and Sigli (Al-Auwal et al., 2024). In the western coastal region, the dominant language is Aneuk Jamee, a dialect of Minangkabau (Nelmawarnia et al., 2020). In the highland regions, the Gayo and Alas languages are spoken (Eades & Hajek, 2006). Meanwhile, residents of the barrier islands, such as of Simeulue Island, primarily speak three main languages, Sigulai, Leukon, and Defayan, with Sigulai and Defayan being the most widely used, despite the presence of other dialects and languages such as Aneuk Jamee, Simoluss, and Haloban (Akmal et al., 2020). The local languages spoken on these barrier islands share greater similarities with Alas and Gayo than with Acehnese. As members of the Western Austronesian subgroup, the languages in this region show a range of variation, including (Fitrianti, 2017):

1. Gayo
2. Malayic languages (spoken along the eastern, central, and western coasts), including Minangkabau, Kerinci, and languages of the Bangka and Belitung Islands
3. Rejang
4. Lampung
5. Languages of the border islands, such as those spoken on Simeulue, Nias, and Siberut
6. Enggano, spoken in Bengkulu Province

2.2 Sound changes

Sound change across languages is a universal phenomenon influenced by various factors such as environment and of articulatory complexity. According to Bloomfield (1933) and Todd et al. (2019), sound change is typically considered “regular”, despite occasional exceptions. Regular sound changes, those not driven by non-phonetic factors, are seen as systematic within specific speech communities and periods, often shaped by environmental constraints. Sound changes can further result in two outcomes. If a change does not alter meaning or the identity of a phoneme, the resulting sounds are considered allophones, or variants of the same phoneme, thus still falling under the category of phonetic change (Gubian et al., 2023).

Phonetics is the study of human speech sounds, while phonology examines the patterns and systems formed by these sounds (Catford, 2001). In historical linguistics, phonological change plays a central role because it reveals how languages develop and transform over time (Campbell, 1998). Different types of sound changes help linguists trace the evolution and relationships among languages throughout history (Anderson et al., 2022). Variations in sound change are closely

linked to the presence of specific phonemes and their interactions within larger phonological environments.

A sound change is classified as phonetic if it does not affect meaning. Conversely, when a change alters meaning, it becomes phonemic. Phonemic correspondences occur reciprocally and regularly between related languages and are marked by high frequency (Vaessen & Blomert, 2010). To establish cognacy, corresponding words must share both form and meaning (Crowley & Bower, 2010). In general, sound changes can be categorized into three types:

1. Phonetic changes without phoneme changes,
2. Phoneme changes accompanied by phonetic changes, and
3. Phoneme changes without phonetic changes.

Sound change based on the position of a phoneme can be categorized into seven types:

1. Lenition: Lenition includes cluster reduction, apocope, syncope, haplology, and compression.
 - Cluster reduction refers to the simplification of consonant clusters, particularly in cases of duplicated consonants without an intervening vowel. For example, the Arabic word *Jahannam* becomes *jahanam* 'hell' in Javanese.
 - Apocope is the omission of one or more phonemes at the end of a word.
 - Syncope refers to the loss of a sound from the middle of a word.
 - Haplology is the deletion of a syllable when similar syllables occur in succession (e.g., *delapan-lapan* becomes *delapan* 'eight').
 - Compression involves the loss of one or more sounds in the middle or end of a word or phrase, often when combining multiple words into a single phrase or sentence.
2. Sound Addition: This category includes anaptyxis, epenthesis, and prothesis.
 - Anaptyxis is the insertion of a short vowel between consonants to simplify syllable structure (e.g., *sabr* becomes *sabar* 'patient').
 - Epenthesis involves adding one or more phonemes within a word.
 - Prothesis is the addition of one or more phonemes at the beginning of a word.
3. Metathesis: This refers to the reordering of letters, sounds, or syllables within a word.
4. Vowel Breaking: This is a sound change where a single vowel becomes a diphthong or triphthong under certain phonological conditions.
5. Assimilation: A phoneme changes to become more similar to a neighboring phoneme.
6. Dissimilation: A phoneme changes to become less similar to a nearby phoneme, often to increase phonetic contrast.
7. Abnormal Sound Changes: These are irregular or unpredictable changes that do not follow established phonological patterns.

2.3 Haloban Language

The Haloban language is one of the local languages spoken on Banyak Island, Aceh Province. Based on interviews with several informants, the Haloban language is closely related to the Defayan language. Historically, Halobanese people frequently traveled to Simeulue Island for various reasons, including pursuing education (at the junior and senior high school levels), seeking employment, starting new lives, or visiting relatives. Defayan is one of the indigenous languages of Simeulue Island, alongside Sigulai, Simolol, and Leukon (Lubis, Zein et al., 2024). In this paper, we use the term Defayan rather than Devayan (as used in some sources), because, based on our observation and analysis, the /v/ sound does not exist in the Defayan language, unlike /f/.

The Haloban ethnic group was formed through the assimilation of five ethnic groups: Minangkabau, Nias, Simeulue, Mandailing, and Batak (Nasution, 2021). This community emerged in the 17th century, although genealogical records show that only six kings ruled the island of Tuanku. The last king reigned before Indonesian independence, after which the monarchy dissolved, and the region became part of the Republic of Indonesia. Assuming each king reigned for approximately 25 years, the Haloban kingdom likely began around 1795, near the end of the 18th century.

3.3 Instrument

The primary instruments used for data collection included a combination of tools designed to capture both linguistic and contextual information. Transparent, practical, and accessible methods for language data collection and management that benefit both researchers and speaker communities are important (Klamer et al., 2021). Audio recording devices were employed to document natural speech and elicited wordlists, ensuring accurate representation of the Haloban language as spoken by native speakers. Swadesh wordlists were utilized to gather a standardized set of basic vocabulary items (Campbell, 1998). Observation sheets were used to record contextual and situational language use during interactions. Additionally, interview guidelines based on open-ended questions facilitated deeper insights into language usage and sociocultural background. Finally, the Eudico Linguistic Annotator (ELAN) software was used to transcribe and annotate the recordings (de Melo Bezerra et al., 2016) in Haloban, Indonesian, and English, enabling precise linguistic analysis.

3.4 Data Collection

Data were gathered through participant observation, interviews, and audio recordings. The researcher recorded both daily conversational speech and elicited wordlists. These recordings were then transcribed and translated with the help of ELAN software. Observations and informal interviews supported the recordings to ensure accurate cultural and contextual interpretation.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis examined sound changes in Haloban through a PAN-Haloban comparison. Sound changes were categorized into regular changes (e.g., consistent substitution of PAN /b/ to Haloban /w/), semi-regular changes such as sound loss, addition, fusion, and unpacking, using the anthropolinguistic approach, the study examined, text (linguistic forms), co-text (surrounding linguistic structures), and context (cultural and ideological background), to understand how sound changes shape the identity and evolution of the Haloban language.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sound Change Regularly on PAN-Haloban Language

Based on the Swadesh wordlist, 71 PAN-Haloban words are inherited from the Haloban language through sound change. There are two types of sound change in the inheritance from the PAN language to the Haloban language: (1) regular sound change inheritance, and (2) semi-regular sound change inheritance. The data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. PAN-Haloban language.

No .	PAN	Haloban language	Gloss
1.	*qabu	<i>Awu</i>	dust
2.	*wai	<i>Oek</i>	water
3.	*anak	<i>Anak</i>	child/kid
4.	*angin	<i>Angina</i>	wind
5.	*asu	<i>Asu</i>	dog
6.	*'apa'	<i>Araya</i>	what
7.	*avan	<i>Binawan</i>	cloud
8.	*manuk	<i>Manok</i>	hen
9.	*bagey'	<i>Bagi</i>	to
10.	*baRu	<i>Awalu</i>	new
11.	*batang	<i>Watang</i>	steam
12.	*batu'	<i>Watu</i>	stone
13.	*beRat	<i>Werat</i>	heavy

Table 2 continued...

14.	*languj	<i>Malange</i>	swim
15.	*dalan	<i>Ralan</i>	walk
16.	*'angen	<i>Peker</i>	think
17.	*bintang	<i>Winton</i>	star
18.	*bu'a	<i>Wo</i>	fruit
19.	*bunga	<i>Wunga</i>	flower
20.	*daging	<i>Dageng</i>	meat
21.	*dayah	<i>ra la</i>	blood
22.	*dabuk	<i>Awok</i>	dust
23.	*duwa	<i>Ruo</i>	two
24.	*'e(m)pat	<i>Ampek</i>	four
25.	*sira(q)	<i>Asila</i>	salt
26.	*gu(n)duh	<i>Guruh</i>	thunder
27.	*waRih	<i>Walal</i>	day
28.	*hati	<i>Ate</i>	liver
29.	*'idung	<i>Ihung</i>	nose
30.	*hizau	<i>Hijau</i>	green
31.	*'i(n)tem	<i>Metem</i>	black
32.	*zantuN	<i>Jantong</i>	heart
33.	*kambiŋ	<i>Habeng</i>	goat
34.	*kabut	<i>Kumabut</i>	fog
35.	*wanan	<i>Inawan</i>	right
36.	*kayu'	<i>ayu-ayu</i>	wood
37.	*ulu	<i>Ulu</i>	head
38.	*t'ilak	<i>Bakilek</i>	flash
39.	*kuning	<i>Kuning</i>	yellow
40.	*kutu	<i>Utu</i>	fleas
41.	*lawa(law)	<i>Kakalawa</i>	spider
42.	*langit	<i>Lengkol</i>	sky
43.	*la'ud	<i>Lor</i>	sea
44.	*lihiy	<i>Lingen</i>	neck
45.	*lima	<i>Lima</i>	five
46.	*ma-kan	<i>Mangan</i>	eat
47.	*mata	<i>Mata</i>	eye
48.	*beli	<i>Weli</i>	buy
49.	*bunuh	<i>Wunu</i>	kill
50.	*pilih	<i>Ilih</i>	choose
51.	*tan m	<i>Tanem</i>	plant
52.	*tuk(tuk)	<i>Entok</i>	knock
53.	*sepsep	<i>Usop</i>	suck
54.	*tiyup	<i>Iyop</i>	blow
55.	*timuR	<i>Timol</i>	east
56.	*'inum	<i>Manginom</i>	drink
57.	*babah	<i>Wakba</i>	mouth
58.	*muta	<i>Uta</i>	vomit
59.	*naik	<i>Naek</i>	go up
60.	*namuk	<i>Namok</i>	mosquito
61.	*bulu'	<i>Wok</i>	hair
62.	*Rumah	<i>Luma</i>	house
63.	*sakit	<i>Akèk</i>	hurt/ill
64.	*sa	<i>Sao</i>	one
65.	*buni'	<i>Wunen</i>	sound
66.	*laki'	<i>Lae</i>	boy/man
67.	*tahun	<i>Taon</i>	year
68.	*'(t)akut	<i>Taot</i>	scare
69.	*tali'	<i>Tali</i>	rope
70.	*telu'	<i>Thu</i>	three
71.	*tuha'	<i>ma?tua</i>	old

From Table 2, sound changes are observed in the consonants /b/ and /v/. In the Haloban language, nearly all instances of PAN /b/ shift to /w/, except in data items 9, 33, and 57. Similarly,

the /v/ sound in the PAN word [avan] also changes to /w/ in Haloban. The PAN consonant /b/ regularly changes to /w/ in both initial and medial positions in Haloban. These regular sound changes involving /b/ and /v/, depending on their position, are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. The position of sound change of PAN Haloban language.

PAN language	Haloban language	Sound change position
*avan	<i>Binawan</i>	in the middle
*qabu	<i>Awu</i>	in the middle
*batang	<i>Watang</i>	at the beginning
*bintang	<i>Winton</i>	at the beginning
*bu'a	<i>Wo</i>	at the beginning
*bunga	<i>Wunga</i>	at the beginning

The PAN word [avan] has evolved into [binawan] in the Haloban language. In this case, the root word [awan] appears in the medial position, preceded by the prefix bin-. Additionally, the sound /b/ at the beginning of a word in PAN regularly changes to /w/ in Haloban, as seen in the transformation of [bunga] to [wunga].

4.2 Sound Change Semi-Regular on PAN-Haloban

Semi-regular sound change in the Haloban language is characterized by sound loss, and is presented in Table 3. Sound loss, or lenition, refers to the weakening of a strong sound into a softer or fainter one. This category includes processes such as cluster reduction, apocope, syncope, haplology, and compression. Table 3 illustrates examples of sound loss observed in the Haloban language.

Table 3. Sound loss (lenition) in PAN-Haloban language.

Data	PAN language	Haloban language	Types	Process
26	*gu(n)duh	<i>guruh</i>	cluster reduction	*gu(n)duh [nd] > [ə] > [guruh]
12	*batu'	<i>watu</i>	Apocope	*batu' ['] > [ə] > [watu]
9	*bagey'	<i>bagi</i>		*bagey' [y'] > [ə] > [bagi]
17	*bintaŋ	<i>winton</i>		*bintaŋ [ŋ] > [ə] > [winton]
36	*kayu'	<i>ayu-ayu</i>		*kayu' ['] > [ə] > [ayu ayu]
49	*bunuh	<i>wunu</i>		*bunuh [h] > [ə] > [wunu]
62	*Rumah	<i>luma</i>		*rumah [h] > [ə] > [luma]
69	*tali'	<i>tali</i>		*tali' ['] > [ə] > [talik]
70	*telu	<i>tlu</i>	Syncope	*telu' ['] > [ə] > [tlu]
67	*tahun	<i>taon</i>		*tahun [h] > [ə] > [taon]
68	*(t)akut	<i>taot</i>		*(t)akut [k] > [ə] > [taot]
70	*telu'	<i>tlu</i>		*telu' [e] > [ə] > [tlu]

Table 4 shows that sound loss in the PAN-Haloban language includes cluster reduction, apocope, and syncope. In addition to sound loss, sound addition is also evident in the PAN-Haloban language. These additions include anaptyxis, epenthesis, and prosthesis. The examples of sound addition processes in the PAN-Haloban language are also presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Sound addition in PAN-Haloban language.

Data	PAN language	Haloban language	Types
51	*tan m	<i>tanem</i>	Anaptyxis
34	*kabut	<i>kumabut, tanem</i>	Epenthesis
51	*tan m		
41	*lawa(law)	<i>kakalawa, entok,</i>	Prosthesis
52	*tuk(tuk)	<i>manginom, matua</i>	
56	*'inum		
71	*tuha'		

Fusion is a type of sound change that occurs when two distinct sounds merge into a single sound, as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Fusion in PAN-Haloban language.

Data	PAN language	Haloban language	Types
53	*sepsep	<i>usop</i>	Fusion
52	*tuk(tuk)	<i>entok</i>	

Unpacking is a type of sound change that is the opposite of fusion; it involves the separation of a single sound into two distinct sounds, each retaining features of the original. In the PAN-Haloban comparison, unpacking occurs in only one instance: [kayu'] becomes [ayu-ayu].

Table 6. Unpacking in PAN-Haloban language.

Data	PAN language	Haloban language	Types
36	*kayu	<i>ayu-ayu</i>	Unpacking

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, eight words in the PAN (Proto-Austronesian) language are inherited by the Haloban language, as shown in data points 3, 5, 9, 37, 39, 45, 47, and 69. A regular sound change is observed in the transition from the consonant /b/ to /w/ in the PAN-Haloban language. This change consistently occurs at the beginning of words, such as in [*bintang] > [winton], [*berat] > [werat], [*bunga] > [wunga], and [*bunuh] > [wunuh]. In the medial position, the /b/ > /w/ shift is seen in words where /b/ is flanked by vowels /a/ and /u/, as in [*qabu] > [awu] and [*dabuk] > [awok]. The word [*bagey] represents a case of lexical inheritance, while the forms [*kabut] > [kumabut] (instead of [kawut]) and [*babah] > [wakba] suggest changes driven by a reduction in perceptual complexity.

Semi-regular sound changes in the PAN-Haloban language include processes such as sound loss, sound addition, fusion, and unpacking. These changes are attributed to the phonetic complexity of Haloban speech. According to Chitoran and Cohn (2009), the concepts of marking, effort, naturalness, novelty, and information content are closely linked to phonetic and phonological complexity. Two key hypotheses explain these sound changes (Mortensen, 2024):

1. Sound changes occur to reduce articulatory complexity
2. Sound changes occur to reduce perceptual complexity

Earlier literature also associates phonetic difficulty with greater complexity, often assuming that more difficult sounds to articulate are “marked”. From an anthropological perspective, sound changes must be understood in relation to the context in which speakers operate. In the case of Haloban, sound change is shaped by situational, social, cultural, and ideological contexts (Lubis, 2019; Sibarani, 2012).

To explore related languages, this study also examined Defayan, spoken on Simeulue Island, which is considered to be very closely related to Haloban. The comparison reveals that 183 words (from the Swadesh wordlist) are cognates between the two languages. A regular sound change is observed from /b/ to /w/ in both initial and medial positions. In addition, the sound /f/ in Defayan regularly corresponds to /w/ in Haloban. For example:

- [afase] > [awase]
- [fesang] > [wesang]
- [bulung] > [wolong]
- [bahak] > [wahak]

These sound correspondences further support a historical link between the two languages. Tracing changes from related languages back to their proto-language forms, especially at the phonological level, is essential in historical linguistics. Cognate analysis not only reveals historical relationships between languages but also helps in formulating rules for both regular and irregular sound changes.

Although regular sound changes are generally considered independent of external context, occurring at specific times within particular speech communities, language, as a product of human culture, undergoes historical development, including phonological evolution. In addition to experiencing change, languages also preserve certain elements that reflect continuity with their proto-language origins. These retentive elements include core vocabulary, stable grammatical features (morphology and syntax), and consistent phonemes. When speakers migrate from their original location to areas inhabited by speakers of other languages, linguistic change often occurs due to cultural acculturation. This process typically begins with dialectal variation, the creation of new vocabulary, and sometimes even changes to grammatical structure (Harya, 2016; Lubis et al., 2022).

Since sound change is intrinsically linked to phonetics, how people articulate sounds is closely connected to articulatory complexity and sociocultural context. From an anthropological perspective, the phenomenon of sound change involves the text, co-text, and context. Text and co-text refer to observable instances of language use (e.g., speech data), whereas context provides the rationale for why those changes occur, rooted in speaker intent and cultural meaning. In comparative analysis between related languages, recurring sound changes constitute a pattern, which the anthropological perspective helps explain. This contextual understanding clarifies the phonological shifts between closely related languages, such as Haloban and Defayan.

Observations show that Haloban speakers are capable of producing the consonant /b/ (and other consonantal phonemes), yet the sound /b/, particularly when it appears at the beginning of a word in the PAN language, regularly shifts to /w/ in Haloban. This same /b/ > /w/ sound change occurs in Defayan, spoken on Simeulue Island, suggesting a shared historical pattern. Moreover, in the Defayan-Haloban comparison, a regular shift from /f/ to /w/ is also noted.

As anthropolinguistic research aims to identify and explain patterns, context plays a critical role in shaping sound change. There are four core anthropolinguistic contexts: situation, culture, social, and ideological.

- Situational context includes the place and time; Haloban speakers live on Banyak Island.
- Cultural context involves their ethnically diverse background, stemming from Simeulue, Nias, Toba, Mandailing, and Minangkabau origins. Historical narratives suggest that migrants from Simeulue Island were among the first settlers, and the Haloban language reflects phonological similarities with Defayan, although they now differ in dialect, intonation, and vocabulary. Notably, the language is in decline among younger generations born after 2000, who understand it but do not actively speak it (Hoff et al., 2024).
- Social context refers to the Haloban community itself, a blend of several ethnicities unified under a shared identity.
- Ideological context is particularly significant. Despite their ability to pronounce /b/ and /f/, Haloban speakers consistently substitute these sounds with /w/ as a marker of group identity.

Semi-regular sound changes, such as sound loss, sound addition, fusion, and unpacking, contribute to the emergence of language varieties. These phonological transformations can result in a new language identity for a new speech community (Yusuf, 2013). Various types of sound change result from the interaction between phonetic patterns, their alignment with phonological categories, and the way this information differs among speakers who come into contact (Harrington et al., 2018). In this way, sound change becomes both a linguistic and cultural act, rooted in how speakers perceive themselves and wish to be perceived by others.

6. CONCLUSION

Sound change is regular in the PAN-Haloban language, particularly the consonant shift from /b/ to /w/. The semi-regular sound changes in PAN-Haloban consist of sound loss (including cluster reduction, syncope, and apocope), sound addition (anaptyxis, epenthesis, and prosthesis), fusion, and unpacking. In a related language, Defayan, regular sound changes occur in the consonants /b/ and /f/, both of which change to /w/. The speech performance of the Halobanese is closely tied to their identity as Haloban. This study holds significant implications from both

linguistic and cultural perspectives. It reveals the importance of examining the kinship between the Haloban and Defayan languages and stresses the need for further documentation of the Haloban language.

However, this study is limited by the small number of informants and the focus on only select sound changes, which may not fully capture the language's complexity. Future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample of speakers, explore additional phonological and grammatical features, and incorporate sociolinguistic factors to better understand the dynamics of language change and identity in the Haloban-speaking community.

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