

## **Lampungic Languages: Looking for New Evidence of Language Shift in Lampung and the Question of Its Reversal\***

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*The Lampungic languages are spoken mainly in Lampung Province and parts of South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Gunarwan (1994) reported that Indonesian was encroaching upon the Lampungic languages in the home domain. However, Gunarwan conducted his research in urban areas, whilst most native speakers of Lampungic languages still live in outlying villages. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine patterns of language use by native speakers in areas where the population is predominantly Lampungic.*

*This study uses sociolinguistic survey techniques and interviews, and also makes use of the concept of language choice, especially of domain. In addition, I also discuss the recent selection of Lampung as a language for use in local language education, and the impact this might have on reversing language shift. In actuality, however, Lampung Province is a multi-ethnic society. As a result, the other language groups in Lampung Province become INVISIBLE GROUPS, or groups which are not politically acknowledged.*

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. Setting and background**

Basically, Lampung is a geographical area and one of the provinces in Sumatra, Indonesia. However, the term is now also used to refer to a certain language and ethnic group. A question arises, however, as to who can be considered to speak a Lampungic language and who are eligible to be called Lampungese people. Up to now, some people say that the Lampungese are people who are the descendents of Lampungese in Lampung and the Lampungic language is the language used and spoken by the residents who are considered ‘the natives’ of Lampung Province.

In actuality, however, there is no similarity between language boundaries and the administrative borders established by the government. For example, even though Komering speakers live in South Sumatra Province, Walker (1975) classified Komering as a subdialect of the Pesisir dialect of the Lampung language. Similarly, Mitani (1980) classifies Kayu

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Agung as a subdialect of the Abung Lampungic dialects, when in fact speakers of the Kayu Agung 'language' at present also live in South Sumatra Province. These cases show that there is no similarity between language boundaries and the administrative borders of local government. The question is therefore: Should the speakers of the Kayu Agung and Komering 'languages' be considered Lampungese?

It seems that the naming of ethnic group affinity according to language is not the same as the result of classification of languages and dialects proposed by linguists. The natives of Kayu Agung, Kayu Agung Asli, Komering, Daya, and Ranau classify themselves in accordance with their own 'language varieties'. Meanwhile, Lampungese living in Lampung Province consider themselves to be Lampungese. They characterize themselves as two groups, the Lampungese belonging to the *Saibatin* tradition and those who adhere to the *Pepadun* tradition (Puspawidjaja 1982:8).

There are differences between the two groups. The Pepadunese allow for the possibility for a member to upgrade his position to become the leader of the group, which is locally called *penyimbang*. For example, from being the *penyimbang* of the group or the village he can become the *penyimbang* of the clan through various tribal requirements. They live in the eastern and central parts of Lampung Province. Meanwhile, Lampung society which holds to the *Saibatin* traditions only allows someone to be elevated to the position of *penyimbang pekon* and does not allow for someone to become *penyimbang* of the clan because the *penyimbang* of the clan inherits his position through his lineage. They live in the western and southern parts, especially on the coast and islands, so that they are often called the *Lampung Pesisir* 'Coastal Lampung' community.

Lampung as a province comprises not just the native Lampung population. The Lampung administration has illustrated the diversity of the Lampungese by creating a symbol for Lampung Province. In this symbol is written *Sang Bumi Rua Jurai*, meaning that Lampung society is composed of two origins, namely the native Lampung people (the receiving community) and those from outside Lampung. The symbol of Lampung Province also illustrates divergent traditions of the Lampung people, namely Lampungese who follow the *Pepadun* tradition and those who adhere to the *Saibatin* tradition.

It is difficult to accurately estimate the total population of native Lampung people because so far no census data has been released in Indonesia which classifies people according to their ethnic identity. Because of this, there is no indication of the division between the native population and newcomers. A publication by the Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Department of Education and Culture) (1978:25) states that according to the 1974 census, the population of Lampung Province was 3,141,939 people. Of that number, the native Lampung people were estimated to total 500,000 people. Based on that, the native Lampung population was estimated to comprise less than twenty percent of the total population. However, Puspawidjaja (1982:8) states that according to the 1980 census, the total population of Lampung Province was 4,624,238 people, of which sixty-five percent were *pendatang* 'outsiders'. Therefore, native Lampung people were estimated to comprise thirty-five percent of the total population. That estimate is supported by Levang and Prayoga (2003:31), who state that according to the 1980 census, Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, and Balinese are mother tongues of seventy-eight percent of villagers in Lampung Province. This means that three-quarters of the Lampung population comes from Java, Madura and Bali, while the rest are native Lampungese.

Further, Levang and Prayoga (2003:32) state that in spite of the fact that the Lampungese people are a minority in their own province, they play a pivotal role in administration. There are many villages mostly inhabited by Javanese who choose the regent from

among the native Lampung people with one goal: to settle land disputes. In fact, the Local Representative Assembly at the provincial and district levels as well as local administrations and the courts have been dominated by native Lampungese. In 1985, for instance, sixty-seven out of seventy-six subdistricts in Lampung Province were headed by a native Lampung person, six by persons from elsewhere in Sumatra, and only three by Javanese.

Is that matter related to language? It is. In the era of local autonomy after the New Order government, the regions began searching for their identity. One of the easiest aspects claimed in ethnic identity is language. Therefore, in order to maintain the Lampungic language as the people's local ethnic identity, the National Department of Education has made local language materials with local content a part of the school curriculum which must be taken by all the students, regardless of their ethnic origin.

## 1.2. The problem

As a result of such factors, there are some phenomena which collide and generate problems. First, the 'native' Lampungese are not dominant numerically, because they comprise only about twenty percent of the total population of Lampung Province. The rest, about eighty percent in number, are transmigrants from Java, Sunda, Bali and other ethnic groups. This means that the Lampungic languages in their linguistic context encounter other language communities, such as Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese, which are far more dominant numerically. In addition, Indonesian is the language of education. Meanwhile, speakers of the Komering subdialect of Lampung living in South Sumatra Province also encounter the use of Palembang Malay, besides Indonesian and other ethnic languages. Consequently, the Lampungese people live in a multiethnic and multilingual region. Such conditions result in language competition. An important question is: Are the Lampungic languages undergoing shift, particularly in remote villages where residents are predominantly native speakers of a Lampungic language?

Second, as an effort to maintain Lampungic languages, the Lampung administration and the National Department of Education have made the Lampungic language part of the local curriculum from elementary through senior high school in Lampung Province. Another goal of this policy is to help define Lampung's identity and ethnic symbol. As local autonomy has taken root in the post-New Order era, the Lampungic language has become a compulsory subject for all students. In actuality, however, upwards of eighty percent of the population of Lampung Province come from Java, Sunda, Bali, and other areas which have their own ethnic languages, and their children certainly have rights to study their own languages. For that reason, is it true when people think that the Javanese have 'dominated' Lampung, including in the matter of language? What about the rights of majority children who are transmigrants and who are forced to learn other ethnic languages, even though those languages are neither their first language nor their own ethnic identity?

## 1.3. Previous research in Lampungic sociolinguistics

The Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (1978:68) stated that Lampungic languages were (in the 1978 context) only used in limited contexts, namely, in the home, in villages inhabited by native Lampungese, and during traditional village consensus

meetings. Most of the young Lampung men in large cities did not use their local language any more and only used Indonesian.

Gunarwan (1994) states there are indications that on the whole the use of the Lampung language is indeed on the decline. In terms of diglossia, the findings show that leakage does exist in the domestic domain of Lampung language use, meaning that the Lampung language is being encroached upon by Indonesian. The same thing is also shown by Gunarwan (2001) who states that a number of Lampungic young men tend to use Indonesian language at home instead of Lampungic. However, it is worth noting that the research conducted by Gunarwan focused on the population in urban areas. In addition, Gunarwan's research was not conducted among speakers of the Komerling subdialect located in South Sumatra Province.

## 2. Research methodology

Our own field research was conducted based on the RAPID APPRAISAL RESEARCH model. It is often called first-level survey. Its objective is to appraise at a glance the language situation, ethnolinguistic groups, and degrees of multilingualism. 'The key objective of this (method) is to formulate hypotheses to be tested in a more in-depth survey or language assessment' (Wetherill 1997). This research used questionnaires as the instrument. Due to this, the data compiled is survey data. However, the survey done did not use Fasold's theory completely. Fasold (1984:215) states that 'the thing to look for is age-distribution numbers. If older speakers report more use of one language and younger speakers more use of another one, this can be an indication of shift.' Therefore, this research did not use the total number of language choice distributions based on age. Moreover, it does not have an implicational scale. It only emphasizes the analysis on language domains: home, neighborhood, trading, education, traditional ceremonies and religion.

Based on the presumption that there is a widespread Lampungic language cluster, the questionnaire was administered in twenty-seven villages considered to be native Lampungese villages, some of which were located in remote areas. The twenty-seven villages were Kayu Agung Asli, Paku, Pulau Gemantung, Adumanis, Perjaya, Damarpura, Tihang, Gunung Terang, Pilla, Tapak Siring, Negeri Ratu, Buay Nyerupa, Kota Besi, Mesir Udik, Banjar Ketapang, Negeri Kepayungan, Sukaraja, Sukanegeri Jaya, Kandang Besi, Tengkujuh, Jabung, Nibung, Nyampir, Terbanggi Besar, Blambangan Pagar, and Ujung Gunung. The first eight are administratively located in the districts of Ogan Komerling Ilir and Ogan Komerling Ulu Selatan, South Sumatra Province.

## 3. Results of data analysis

The analysis of the data was conducted for each domain of use. The domains of use data are explained below.

### 3.1. Language use in domestic domains

The language used in everyday life around the home is one hundred percent Lampungic. In some families, however, findings indicate that they speak a mix of Indonesian and Lampungic languages. The evidence is shown in the following table.

Table 1. The use of language in the home domain

Total Responses	Lampung	Indonesian	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
54	54	–	–	6: occasional Indonesian language

Table 1 shows that all the subjects use Lampungic in their family interactions, but there are only six subjects who reported that they also occasionally speak Indonesian.

### 3.2. Language use in the neighborhood domain

This study was administered in some remote areas where the residents are predominantly native Lampungese. It is, therefore, assumed that these native Lampungese live side by side with other Lampungese, but there is some possibility that they live with speakers of other languages such as Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese.

Table 2. The use of language in the neighborhood domain

Total Responses	Lampung	Indonesian	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
54	45	–	–	9: including Lampung, Indonesian, and others

The table shows that in the neighborhood domain, there are some subjects who speak Indonesian and other languages whenever they interact with their neighbors. This is understandable because not all groups of subjects live in isolation from other ethnic groups. Some of them live with Javanese, Sundanese and so forth, inducing them to become multilingual. They even use certain languages, for example Javanese, when they talk to Javanese people. It means that they are able to speak the language of these settlers.

### 3.3. Language use in the trading domain

The term TRADING in this paper refers to trading on a small scale, such as in the daily and weekly markets. Markets are the places where various ethnic groups gather to transact business, and where they have interactions in various languages.

Table 3. The use of language in the trading domain

Events	Total Responses	Lampung	Indonesian	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
At the daily markets	21	5	3	1: Indonesian and Palembang Malay	12: including Lampung, Indonesian, Palembang Malay, and others
At the weekly markets	47	18	8	2: Palembang Malay	19: including Indonesian, Palembang Malay, Lampung, and others

The table indicates that there is some tendency of the native Lampungese to speak a mixture of languages including Lampungic, Indonesian, Palembang Malay and others, such as Javanese. This is understandable because markets are the places where a lot of ethnic groups meet since not all villages have their own market.

### 3.4. Language use in the education domain

The use of language in education is divided in various categories: the use of language in teaching the first grade of elementary school, the use of language in general, and the use of language during recess. The results show that various languages are used, but with Indonesian predominating.

Table 4. The use of language in the education domain

Events	Total Responses	Lampung	Indonesian	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
Teaching first grade	19	–	12	–	7: Indonesian and Lampung
Teaching at school	46	1	38	1: Indonesian and Palembang Malay	6: Indonesian and Lampung
Children playing together at recess	50	28	4	2: Palembang Malay	16: including Indonesian, Palembang Malay, and Lampung

In this domain, not all teachers can use Lampungic because not all teachers are Lampungese. Some of them are Javanese and their background influences the use of language at school. Besides, the students who have just recently enrolled in the first grade are not native Lampungese. As a result, teachers just use Indonesian immediately in the

first grade even though government policy permits the local language to be used as the language of instruction in transition classes.

Meanwhile, unofficial interactions outside class indicate an increase in the use of a mixture of languages: Indonesian, Palembang Malay and Lampung. This is seen in the evidence of code-switching uttered by students and their peers and this code-switching depends on their peers' ethnic group.

### 3.5. Language use in traditional ceremonies

The traditional ceremonies are connected with the cultural values of the society and these are usually the ceremonies of the human life cycle such as birth, marriage and death. In general, these traditional ceremonies are conducted in the local languages. The data gathered from the native Lampungese, however, show a different phenomenon. They use Indonesian and mix languages such as Palembang Malay, but the use of Lampung predominates.

Table 5. Language use in the domain of traditional ceremonies

Total Responses	Lampung	Indonesian	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
54	39	7	–	8: including Indonesian, Palembang Malay, and Lampung

Based on the table above, the use of those languages raise some questions. The traditional ceremonies are rich in the local cultural values which are not found in the other languages' traditions, but the evidence shows the use of other languages, such as Indonesian, Palembang Malay and Lampungic in the ceremonies. Further study is needed regarding the change of cultural identities occurring in Lampungese society.

### 3.6. Language use in the religious domain

Religion determines the use of language as a means of communication. The Lampungese who are majority Muslim tend to use Arabic and Indonesian when participating in religious ceremonies. This is shown in Table 6.

The use of a mixture of languages is understandable since there is no translation of the Al Qur'an in Lampungese but only in Indonesian and the source language used is Arabic. This mixture of Arabic and Indonesian will perforce be used in various religious ceremonies.



Table 6. Language use in the religious domain

Events	Total Responses	Lampung	Indonesian	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
Prayer (assumed corporate)	51	9	5	23: Arabic 3: Indonesian and Arabic	11: Indonesian, Arabic, and Lampung
Sermon (at the mosque)	51	4	30	11: Indonesian and Arabic	6: including Indonesian, Palembang Malay, Lampung, and Arabic
Religious ceremonies	14	5	5	–	4: including Indonesian, Lampung, Arabic, and Javanese

## 4. Discussion

The previous analysis indicates that there are working divisions in the use of languages in various domains. Native Lampungese use the Lampungic languages in the low domains such as the home and traditional ceremonies. Meanwhile, they use Indonesian in high domains. This distribution indicates a situation of diglossia.

In a situation of stable diglossia, the roles of every language are relatively constant, but the analysis of language use of the native Lampungese indicates that the domestic domains, which are the last place of endangered language preservation, has demonstrated some use of the Indonesian language. In the neighborhood domain, the native Lampungese use a mix of languages. This, however, cannot be considered to indicate a shift in the use of the Lampungese languages because Lampungic still predominates in the domestic areas. The condition can be regarded as diglossia leakage, which means that the domestic domains that are supposed to be the base camp of the first language are repressed by the use of another language, in this case Indonesian.

Based on the classification of the language functions by Edwards (1985:17), there are communicative and symbolic functions, and at the level of symbolic functions, the native Lampungese have started to mix languages. This is seen in traditional ceremonies. The use of languages in the adaptable moments is the use of hidden instrumental functions (Edwards 1985:19) which can group people ethnically. This can be seen as strong evidence for diglossia leakage.

This raises some issues of concern among the stakeholders, the Lampungese academics and policy makers in the provincial administration. As stated above, the majority of policy makers in Lampung administration are Lampungese people. With the support from academics, the Lampung administration through the policy of the National Department of Education has made the Lampungic languages part of the materials in the school curriculum. This is official for all schools in Lampung from elementary through senior high school.

Indeed, such an effort cannot be regarded as a primordial move because this effort is a kind of rights protection attached to ethnic identities. The policy, however, may create problems later on. First, Lampungic languages are not the only languages used in Lampung Province. The Komerling subdialect speakers in South Sumatra Province are also



speakers of Lampungic. However, they inhabit regions in different provinces. Can the locally constructed curriculum be mandated for them? If yes, more problems arise because of the dialect differences. Will the Lampungic speakers of the Komerling subdialects be forced to use and learn another dialect in order to get good scores in school?

Second, language is not meant for communication solely but has other functions in symbolizing the collective and ethnolinguistic identity of the Lampungese people. By imposing Lampungic language as the only local language used in schools, the implications are that policy makers will imagine that Lampung residents are a homogeneous ethnic community. The fact, however, is that Lampung is a multiethnic society. The use of Lampungic languages as a symbol, therefore, represents the power of ethnicity, and this is demonstrated in the curriculum. This makes the other ethnic groups INVISIBLE. This policy can be considered a political identity.

If the policy is not revised, there will be some accusations towards some people and departments in presenting something for the sake of cultural hegemony over other ethnicities. One of the steps to be taken is to allow Lampungic to remain part of the local content in the educational curriculum. However, it must not become a compulsory subject which must be taken by students whose native language is not Lampungic. Meanwhile, students whose native language is Lampungic are required to take the subject. It is more appropriate to implement these ideas in the era of freedom and peaceful pluralism by casting away unfairness and including the various languages in the identity of each group. It is better to implement it rather than to destroy the languages and identities of non-native Lampungese children.

In addition, efforts to reverse any perceived early stages of Lampungic language shift can also be conducted by using some of the positive attitudes of Lampungic native speakers. Some of their dreams are to be able to read and write in Lampungic. One of the ways of doing this may be through the presence of media, even though it will be practically difficult to implement because its presence is not in a socio-cultural form but integrated in a socio-economic system. The authority of the local government, however, can assist the media in any language shift reversal project without censoring the news in the media. If the media does exist and is widely accepted, Lampungic native speakers will be able to read and write in their own language like Sundanese and Javanese communities, by having a few monthly magazines in their local language.

## 5. Concluding remarks

This research is different from that conducted by Gunarwan (1994) because this research was conducted in rural areas which are predominantly Lampungic, while Gunarwan's study was conducted in urban areas. However, the findings of this research confirm the findings from Gunarwan's study, which states that there is diglossia leakage and a presumption of Lampungic language shift.

One of the efforts made by Lampung administrations through the National Department of Education was to begin a project to reverse language shift by inserting Lampungic language into the local curriculum. This effort might be regarded as cultural hegemony by presupposing homogeneous Lampung residents, whereas the residents of Lampung province are multiethnic, with eighty percent being settlers. An account, therefore, must be taken of the language rights of non-native Lampungese children.

An effort, therefore, must be made to help prevent the shift of Lampungic languages. One of the possible efforts is issuing a magazine in Lampungic whose target readers are

Lampungic native speakers. In addition, the heads of the ethnic groups should be the pioneers in using the Lampungic languages in every ceremony and the languages should be spoken completely in family interactions. These efforts, however, will not work if Lampungic native speakers do not have positive attitudes and high loyalty towards their own languages.

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