



LINGUISTIC SITUATION AROUND EAST FLORES AND ALOR-PANTAR ISLANDS IN EAST INDONESIA

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to discuss the linguistic situation around East Flores and Alor-Pantar islands in terms of language change and contact within the area, including Austronesian languages and Papuan languages.

Methodology: The linguistic features discussed in this research were based on data collected directly by paying a visit to the village of Baranusa in West Pantar; Tanjung Bunga, in East Flores; and Lewoleba in Lembata. The instruments include 200 Swadesh word list and 646 words referring to cultural vocabulary.

Results: Results shows that it is based on research that has been conducted since 2014 which covers identification on the genetic identity and historical relations of Alorese, Kedang, and Lamaholot. These three languages are spoken in many different locations in East Flores-Pantar-Alor. We compare their phonological and lexical evidence to reveal their historical relations which leads to the historical changes from the protoforms as reflected in the present languages. We also consider the fact that there are also some contacts with Papuan speakers and the role of Indonesian as the national language and as the new *lingua franca*.

Implications: Thus, East Indonesia has been known for its unique linguistic situation. Its geographical condition enables every language and its varieties to develop their own DNA. Linguists from all over the world see this area as a major contact area that is defined by a single wave diffusion heading in various directions. It shaped the linguistic area in East Indonesia as it is now. This situation reflects some patterns that can be seen from certain changes in terms of phonological and lexical aspects through some languages that exist in the present. This situation covers languages spoken in certain areas, such as languages spoken in the area of Lesser Sunda islands.

Keywords: *Linguistic situation, East Indonesia, Austronesian languages, Papuan languages, East Flores, Alor-Pantar Islands, Alorese, Kedang, Lamahot*

INTRODUCTION

East Flores and Alor-Pantar islands in the Lesser Sunda Islands is a border area between Austronesian and non-Austronesian (Papuan) speakers. The area is inhabited around 300.000 individuals living across the eastern coast of Flores to the islands of Adonara, Solor, Lembata, Pantar, and Alor. (Grimes et al., 1997; Lewis, 2009; Petrova, 2016; Stokhof, 1975) The majority of the speakers are living on the coasts or in the lowland area near the sea. Some inhabitants, like Kedang's speakers, preferred to live in the highland, near mountain Uyelewun (north Lembata). Some Lamaholot speakers such as Adonara and Solor could not help but live in an area near both the mountain and the sea due to the small size of the islands. In East Flores, those who are still living apart from the advanced civilizations in the cities such as Larantuka and Lewoleba, the capital of two major districts; East Flores and Lembata, are keeping their traditions better than those who live near the city. For example, people in the sub-district of Tanjung Bunga in the north end of Flores are very close to some rituals concerning their ancestors. They tend to know more about the history of their predecessors than those who live near the main harbors.

This article discusses the linguistic situation in East Flores and Alor-Pantar islands through the identification of three Austronesian languages; Alorese, Kedang, and Lamaholot. As a border area between two major groups of languages in Asia-Pacific, Alorese has not been identified as a clear member of a certain group until Sulistyono and Fernandez concluded that Alorese should be included with other Austronesian languages around it; they are Kedang and Lamaholot. (Sulistyono, 2015) Therefore, its membership in East Flores sub-group (Fernandez, 1983, 1996; Suleri and Cavagnaro, 2016) has been cleared.

Alorese is spoken in east Indonesia and is a member of the Austronesian family. Its speakers' location covers from across the north part of Pantar island to the north-western end of the northern part of Alor island in east Indonesia. Alorese speakers' society is also found in the surrounding islands e.g. Ternate and Buaya between Pantar and Alor. Alorese's

speakers include 25.000 natives. They live mostly in the coasts in villages such as Marica, Baranusa, Pandai, Munasely, Alor Kecil, Ternate, and Buaya. Baranusa is the most crowded area among all. It is the main village of the sub-district of West Pantar. It is also the center for fishery, commerce, transportation, and education.

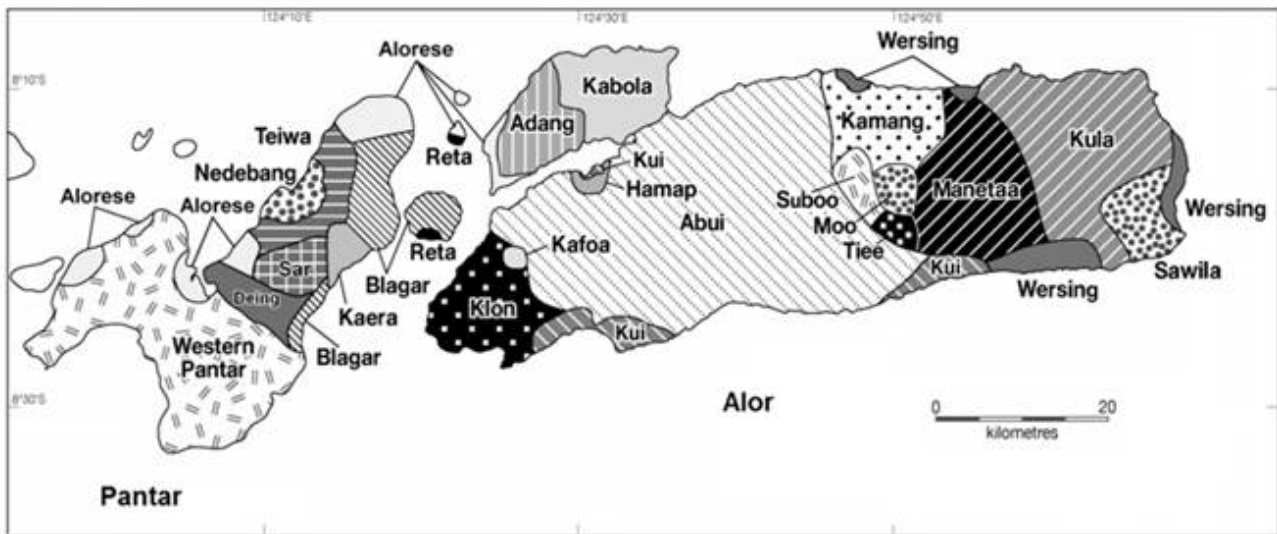


Figure 1: Languages in Pantar and Alor (Klamer, 2012:58)

Even though Baranusa is a rather medium-sized village, it has become the primary transit for big ships in Pantar thanks to the commercial harbor that is located nearby. Baranusa is also planned as the capital for the soon to be formed district of Pantar in the near future.

Alorese speakers locations are separated in many pocket areas. The locals ensured that people from these pocket areas have unfolded their individual way of communication and interaction toward other speakers of surrounding languages (AN and non-AN languages). Furthermore, these communications and interactions also involve the use of Bahasa Indonesian as present time *lingua franca*. This linguistic situation could be the background reason for the possibilities for each Alorese variety (in every pocket area) to have developed its individual characteristic. According to (Klamer, 2015), the linguistic development in each dialect is also driven by the natural environment situation where every location is distanced away from another. This situation allows a hypothesis saying that every dialect might have developed an advanced set of language features that made one variety different from another, from one location to another. From that, it is important to reveal any possible answers about the way each variety of Alorese has developed its own DNA diachronically.

In a long time ago, Alorese was actually a *lingua franca* on the littoral areas of Alor-Pantar islands. Nevertheless, its role as a *lingua franca* was dumped by Bahasa Indonesia and Malay as the language of inter-ethnic interaction from the middle of the 1970s. (Klamer, 2011; Klamer and Ewing, 2009; Klamer and Flora, 2004; Klamer and Staden, 2008; Mendes and da Silva, 2018) Discussing its relationship to its surrounding Austronesian languages, Alorese has a rather closer relationship to Lamaholot compared to its relationship to Kedang in terms of history and linguistic features (Doyle, 2010).

The people of Alorese mostly have an orientation to the sea. The majority of them are Muslims. The reality that Alorese speaking areas are not together in one area set into the situation where each group develops their own habits. Alorese's habit reflects a good example. when the people of Marica or Kedang are on their journey and feel thirsty when they were looking for fish or traveling through Kedang strait, they are allowed take a number coconut from Kedangs land but not taking them home. This law prevails vice versa to the people Kedang. Other villages may have different habits and laws that are binding their members of society.

The map above shows the location of the Alorese speakers area. As we can see that the surrounding languages are Papuan languages. Alorese speaker areas are pointed in the northern part of Pantar. The locations are divided into several villages, they are Marica, Baranusa, Panday, Munasely, Alor Kecil, Ternate, and Buaya. These villages inhabited by around 1000 to 3000 individuals who mostly trilingual with Bahasa Indonesia and Lamaholot. Being able to communicate in multiple languages is very common in this area. The teacher taught their students with Bahasa Indonesia while traders usually have interactions with speakers from west islands with Lamaholot or sometimes Tetun if they meet customers from Timor island.

Physical infrastructures are not quite acceptable in this area. In the island of Pantar, roads are still made out of rocks. There

is only a 300 m long paved street from the newly built harbor to the center of the village. Trans-Pantar street that is planned long ago is no longer developed. It was built in the early 1990s and it is damaged. It has not been rebuilt ever since.

Public facilities are also rather minimum in the area. In Pantar, there are only three public high-schools and several middle schools. Mosques are quite many, and they are well constructed with concrete and bricks. Houses and traditional houses are located nearby. Some are already constructed with modern design and some are still semi-permanent with huts and zinc. The main harbor which is located in the village of Baranusa anchored by some big ships at least three times a week. Those ships are usually from Makassar, Kupang, and Surabaya. Air transportation is centered in Kalabahi, the capital of the district of Alor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Works on Alorese have been done with concerns on grammar, language contact and sociolinguistic point of view. Klamer made a description of Alorese's grammar and concluded that a part of Alorese reflects some of the Papuan features. Ino Ino (2013) put forward a list of proto-form of Modebur, Kaera, and Teiwa in Pantar and proposed that he found at least an Austronesian language is spoken in north Pantar (Alorese). Stokhof grouped the languages in Alor-Pantar and asserted that the Alorese speaking area includes north Pantar, Alor Kecil and small islands between Alor and Pantar.

(Samely, 1991) published a book stating that there is one Austronesian language out of the thirteen languages spoken in Pantar. Alorese also appeared in the dictionary of Western Pantar language by (Holton, 2008)

East Indonesia has been seen by many linguists as a unique contact area that is defined by a single wave diffusion going in various directions that shaped the area as it is now. These wave diffusion processes involve languages spoken in the area, including Alorese, Kedang, and Lamaholot. Works on Kedang and Lamaholot have been done from synchronic to diachronic point of view. Fernandez conducted several research projects on both languages and made a conclusion that Kedang and Lamaholot were members of Flores sub-group. Nonetheless, the previous diachronic investigation in east Indonesia was only narrowed on lexical and morphological comparisons of the languages whereas Klamer stated that the main focus of the language comparison in east Nusantara should be framed in terms of typological comparison on shared linguistic features.

In terms of genetic identity of Alor-Pantar languages and the neighboring Papuan languages, Holton (Holton et al., 2012; Moro, 2019) stated that there was no lexical evidence to support the membership of Alor-Pantar languages in Trans-New Guinea family (a group initiated by Greenberg referring to a group of Papuan languages in East Timor and Papua mainland). Looking at Alorese's speaking location being surrounded by non-Austronesian languages, it was assumed that there was a process towards the language contact. Klamer also stated that the contact between Papuan and Austronesian languages in east Indonesia was not a one-way process but rather went in both directions. Therefore, it cannot be seen from only one perspective. The findings were also proven by the existence of a number of shared syntactic features which signal Papuan influences in Alorese. It suggests giving attention to a presence of Papuan languages in Lamaholot homeland (around east Flores, Lembata, and Adonara). Current research in east Indonesia has revealed that some linguistic features of Papuan and Austronesian languages have diffused to one another. This scenario can possibly be found in Alorese and is reflected by its varieties.

Ongoing research by Klamer (NWO Vici Grant Research Project 2014-2019) focuses on the investigation of the history and dispersal of speakers of Papuan Alor-Pantar languages in the region of Lamaholot-Pantar-Alor and their interactions with Austronesian speaker communities. As part of this project, Moro examines the transfer of structures into L2 Alorese from its Papuan neighbors. Moro's research is concerning on the language contacts of Alorese's speakers with some surrounding Papuan languages in Alor (Adang, Kaera, Blagar, Sar, Krok, Nadebang and Teiwa).

METHOD

The linguistic features discussed in this research were based on data collected directly by paying a visit to the village of Baranusa in West Pantar; Tanjung Bunga, in East Flores; and Lewoleba in Lembata. The instruments include 200 Swadesh word list and 646 words referring to cultural vocabulary. Sixteen informants were selected and asked about the languages according to their knowledge. These linguistic data were then compared in terms of the three languages' phonological and lexical similarities by applying lexicostatistics and proto-language reconstruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical linguistics proposed that languages have the ability to change from time to time. The changes are observable and explainable in terms of determining the degree of kinship between languages through the reconstruction of a proto-

language from a number of related languages. (Ghazanfarpour et al., 2013) stated that all languages are always changing constantly. The changes can be found at the level of phonology, lexical, meaning, and grammar. These changes appear on their nature and cannot be circumvented. Languages are also able to separate into several branches of new linguistic features that can form new languages. These languages have inherited features which are still in coherence with the proto-language. It shows that these languages are genetically related. (Bynon, 1977; Crowley, 2010; Saeidi and Prasad, 2014)

When determining cognate forms from some related languages, things that need to be considered are words that should not be included as cognates even though they looked similar. These words are those that are borrowed words, onomatopoeic sounds, nursery words, idiophones or symbolic words and the words that appear to have rather a similar form because of its own changes. In order to identify these kinds of words, we should consider surrounding languages or language that has *lingua franca* role such as Bahasa Indonesia. They might have influenced the original form of the languages being compared.

Based on kinship percentages, it appears that Alorese, Kedang, and Lamaholot have close historical relations. Alorese and Kedang showed 50% of cognates while Alorese and Lamaholot showed a high percentage which is over 70% of cognate. Meanwhile, Kedang and Lamaholot showed 52% of cognate. This percentage indicates that the three languages have rather close historical relationship. From that, it can be assumed that their speakers are also have come in contact with one another that they shared historical background.

Initial observation on secondary data (Nishiyama, 2011; Planella and Jimenez-Jimenez, 2018) (Lelang, 2008; Robson, 1995) of 200 Swadesh list of the three languages indicates that they all have a close historical relationship. Below reflects some examples of the basic vocabulary shared cognates of Alorese spoken in Baranusa together with Kedang and Lamaholot.

Table 1. Samples of shared cognates of Alorese (Spoken in Baranusa), Kedang and Lamaholot.

No.	Gloss	Baranusa	Kedang	Lamaholot
1.	root	[ramuk]	[ramuʔ]	[amut]
2.	smoke	[panuhun]	[nuhen]	[nuhun]
3.	new	[wunon]	[werun]	[wuʔu]
4.	swollen	[ban]	[baban]	[baʔa]
5.	to breath	[nahin]	[nein]	[nain]
6.	to grow	[tawan]	[tawe]	[tawa]
7.	come	[dai]	[mai]	[mai]
8.	leaf	[lɔlɔn]	[lɔlɔ]	[lolon]
9.	sit down	[tɔbɔ]	[tebe]	[tobo]
10.	black	[miten]	[miten]	[miten]

Based on these percentages, Alorese, Kedang, and Lamaholot can all be included in one group of the same language called Flores Group. Therefore they are possible to have a high level of linguistic similarities.

Linguistic relationship between some languages in a group can put up some patterns of sound changes in term of the origin of each language phonologically. On the other hand, at the lexical level, the linguistic relationship between languages can also reveal exclusively shared retention and innovation in their phonological term. These can be observed through further qualitative analysis of Alorese, Kedang, and Lamaholot.

After evidence on the identity of some Austronesian languages in east Indonesia have been presented, we can at least have a clearer picture of linguistic description in east Indonesia. However, additional questions arise as a result. For example, while the location of Alorese speakers are much closer to Kedang, why do they have a closer relationship to Lamaholot? The answer relies on their cultural aspects. People of Baranusa are famous for their coastal culture, such as fishery. The people of Lamaholot have a rather similar orientation. However, the people of Kedang have a rather different cultural orientation. This socio-cultural situation makes the communication and interaction between the people of Alorese to be more intense with the people of Lamaholot because they have the same coastal culture, and they have more intense contact towards one another. However, it does not apply to the people of Kedang. Kedang people are more likely to stay in the highland. They are not interested to come in contact through the sea. They tend to have more intense contact with people from west Lembata or Lewoleba through land travel activities (trade, education, and services). There is a minibus to Lewoleba (district-capital) passing three times a day.

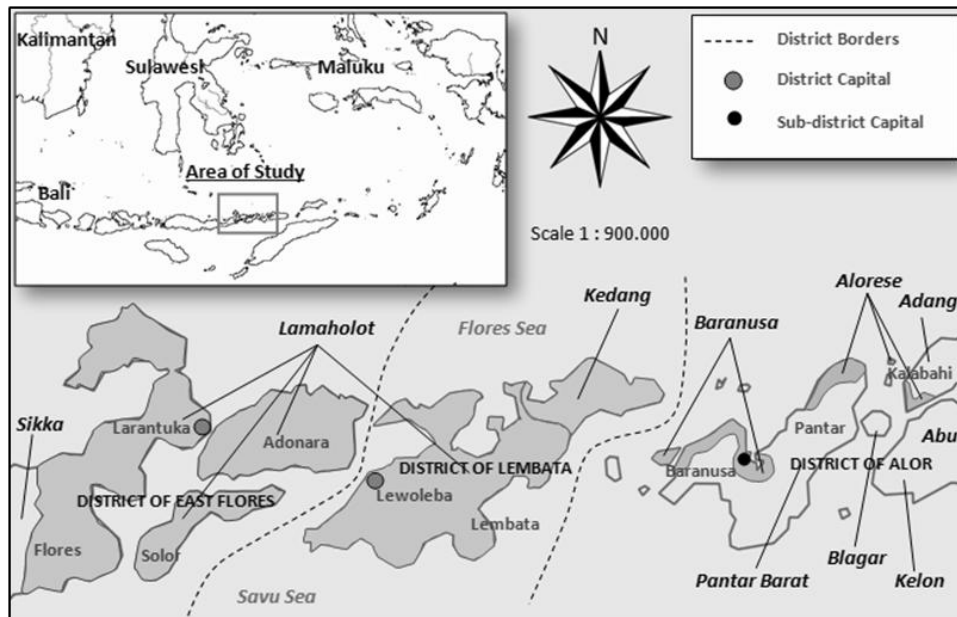


Figure 2: Lamaholot speakers' areas (East Flores, Adonara, Solor and Lembata), Kedang speakers' areas (eastern Lembata) and Baranusa speaker's area (a part of northern Pantar)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The further discussion arises when it comes to language contact. We all know the fact that the speakers of Alorese and other languages' speakers have come in contact for the past 800 years. Contact between speakers occurs when agents are available. These agents can be some sort of tools that enables a group of speakers to come in contact with other groups of speakers. When there are no agents, the degree of contact becomes minimum. For example, when the people in Marica (located in the western edge of Pantar) live in a location just 10 km to the next village whose inhabitants speak a different language, the degree of contact can be varying. At the moment, there are no roads that connect the villages. The villages are separated by a mountain in the southern territory. Therefore, contact between these two groups of society is very limited. However, to the next village located 20 km away to the east, named Baranusa, the people of Marica come in contact a lot. Many people of Marica doing business in Barunsa, their children go to school in Baranusa and vice versa. Some people in Baranusa also work as teachers in Marica. This situation is supported by the existence of an acceptable road infrastructure and transportation tools, such as trucks and motorcycles.

This contact situation enables languages in the eastern part of Lesser Sunda islands in east Indonesia to develop a unique pattern described as single wave diffusion that goes in various directions. These processes involve not only Austronesian languages but also Papuan languages. These patterns are observable and therefore require a deeper observation in order to find an in-depth understanding of linguistic situation in the area.

CONCLUSION

From this discussion, it can be concluded that the linguistic situation in East Indonesia, especially in East Flores and Alor-Pantar islands are very diverse that it requires a deeper understanding to find a certain pattern in order to determine the direction of its changes based on historical relations and contact evidence. Moreover, this linguistic situation could lead to findings on a new way of observing languages in east Nusantara.

Alorese was a rather suitable example. Alorese speakers' locations which are not together in one area, unlike any other languages, are very interesting to be observed. As we can see on the map, the pocket areas around Pantar and Alor are quite unique considering the surrounding languages that are non-Austronesians. The fact that Alorese is the only language spoken in the area triggers a question of whether this language had been developed into several variations. There have not been any works or observations considering the language variation in each Alorese's speakers distanced locations. Although there are also possibilities where each location shared many similarities which lead to the assumptions that the variations are still at the level of dialect, it is still obligatory to make a further exploration about any possibilities whether there has been a new development in terms of each varieties linguistic DNA. In this case, a further examination in Alorese dialects through dialectometry and linguistic comparison analyses might be required for further research.

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