

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

Katubi<sup>†</sup>

Center for Social and Cultural Studies  
Indonesian Institute of Sciences  
obingk@yahoo.com

This paper reports on the findings of research, showing new evidence for what is happening in the Lampungic languages and whether it is a case of language maintenance or that of language shift. The Lampungic languages are spoken mainly in Lampung Province and part of South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Gunarwan (1994) explained that the Indonesian language is encroaching upon the Lampungic languages in the home domain of language use. But Gunarwan did his research in the urban areas of Lampung. Most of the native speakers of the Lampungic languages, however, still live in outlying villages. Thus, the author explains the phenomenon of language use by native speakers of Lampungic in the more remote areas, such as Ranau, Krui, Talang Padang, Jabung, Melinting and Mesir Udik, where the populations are predominantly Lampungic peoples.

This study uses survey techniques and interviews from a sociolinguistic approach and also makes use of the concept of language choice, especially of domain. In addition, this paper also discusses the question of reversing the shift occurring in the Lampungic languages because Lampungic languages have also been identified as a language for use in local language education. This means that Lampungic languages have been indexed as a symbol. Actually, however, Lampung Province is a multi-ethnic society. Because of that, the other language groups in Lampung Province become INVISIBLE GROUPS, or groups which are not politically acknowledged. The decision makers imagined Lampung Province to be ethnically homogeneous.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank SIL International, Indonesia Branch for inviting me to join the West Indonesian Survey Team in conducting the survey in Lampung and South Sumatra Province, especially Karl Anderbeck as the head of research and other researchers for data collection and analyses: Charlie Hanawalt, Reynold Dean, Sandra Lee, Tanti Susilawati, Kristina Tarp and The Liana Husein. I thank the residents of Lampung who ‘taught’ me their language and culture.

### **1.2 Setting and Background**

Basically, Lampung is one of the geographical areas and one of the provinces in Sumatra, Indonesia. However, the term is now also used for a certain language and ethnic group. The question is who can be considered to speak Lampungic languages and who is eligible to be called

---

\* Paper presented at Tenth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics, Puerto Princesa, Philippines, 17-20 January 2006

<sup>†</sup> The writer is a researcher at the Center for Social and Cultural Studies, Indonesian Institute of Sciences

Lampungese people. Up to now some people say that the Lampungese are people who are the descendants of Lampungese in Lampung and the Lampungic language is the language used and spoken by the residents who are considered 'the natives' of Lampung.

Actually, there is no similarity between the language boundary and the administrative border of the government. This is based on evidence found in the use of Lampungic languages. Previous studies as conducted by Walker (1975) imply that there is a difference inconsistency between the administrative borders and language boundaries because in his research he classifies the Komerling subdialect into the Pesisir dialect of Lampungic languages. On the contrary, the speakers of the Komerling subdialect now live in the administration of South Sumatra Province. Meanwhile, Mitani classifies Kayu Agung as a subdialect of the Abung Lampungic dialects. Actually, the speakers of the Kayu Agung 'language' at present also live in South Sumatra. Those cases show that there is no similarity between language boundaries and the borders of local government. The question is therefore: Should the speakers of the Kayu Agung and Komerling '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, Komerling, Daya, and Ranau classify their groups in accordance with their 'language varieties'. Meanwhile, Lampungese living in Lampung Province consider themselves to be Lampungese. They characterize themselves as two groups, the Lampungese belonging to *Saibatin* tradition and those in the tradition of *Pepadun* (Puspawidjaja et al. 1987: 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 middle parts of Lampung Province. Meanwhile, Lampung society which holds to Saibatin custom 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 is not only comprised of the native Lampung population. Lampung administration illustrates the diversity of the Lampungese in creating a symbol for Lampung Province. In this symbol is written *Sang Bumi Rua Jurai*, meaning that Lampung society is comprised 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 *Pepadun* tradition and those who adhere to Saibatin tradition.

It is difficult to know the total population of native Lampung people because so far has been no census data released in Indonesia according to the classification of ethnic groups. Because of that, there is no listing of the division of the native population and the newcomers. Depdikbud (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, native Lampung people were estimated to be about 20%. However, Puspawidjaja (1987: 8) states that according 1980 census, the total of the Lampung people was 4.624.238 people. The composition of the Lampung population was comprised of 65%

*pendatang* ‘outsiders’. Therefore, the native Lampung people are estimated to be only 35%. That explanation is supported by Levang (2003: 31) who states that according to the 1980 census, Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, and Balinese languages are mother tongues of 78% of the villagers in Lampung Province. This means that three-fourths of the Lampung population came from Java and the rest are native Lampung people.

Further, Levang (2003: 32) states that in spite of the fact that Lampungese people are a minority, 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. Officials and the Local Representative Assembly at the Province and District levels as well as the Courts were dominated by the natives Lampung people. In 1985, for instance, 67 out of 76 sub-districts in Lampung Province were headed by native Lampung people, six by other Sumatran people, and only three by Javanese people.

Is that matter related to language? It is. In the local autonomy era 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 Lampungese language as their ethnic identity, the National Department of Education has made local language materials with local content as part of the school curriculum which must be taken by all the students, regardless of their ethnic origin.

### **1.3 The Problem**

Based on the earlier explanation, there are some phenomena which collide and generate problems. First, the ‘native’ Lampungese in Lampung in the composition of the population in Lampung Province are not dominant in number because they are only twenty percents of the total number of people in Lampung Province. The rest are about eighty percent in number and 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 in number. In addition, Indonesian is the language of education. Meanwhile, the speakers of the Komerling subdialect of the Lampungic language living in South Sumatra Province even encounter the use of Palembang Malay, besides Indonesian and other ethnic languages. Consequently, the Lampungese people live in a multiethnic and multilingual region. Such a condition results in language competition. The question is: Do Lampungic languages undergo shift, especially the languages in remote villages whose residents are dominantly native speakers of Lampungic languages?

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 content from elementary to senior high schools in Lampung Province. Another goal of this policy is to search for Lampung's identity and ethnic symbol since local autonomy has taken effect in the post-New Order era. Lampungic languages taught in the school have become a compulsory subject for all students. Actually, eighty percent of the Lampung population come from Java, Sunda, Bali, and other areas which surely 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 although those languages are neither their first language nor their own ethnic identity?

## 1.4 Previous Research in Lampungic Sociolinguistics

Depdikbud (1978: 68) states that Lampungic languages nowadays (in the 1978 context) are only of limited use, i.e., in house, in villages inhabited by the native Lampungese, and during traditional village consensus meetings. Most of the Lampungic young men in big cities do not use their local language any more and only use 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 area. In addition, Gunarwan's research was not administered to speakers of the Komerling subdialect located in South Sumatra Province.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is field research, based on the model *Rapid Appraisal Research*. It is often called first-level survey, to know at a glance the language situation, ethnolinguistic groups and multilingualism. "The key objective of this (method) is to formulate hypotheses to be tested in a more in-depth survey or language assessment" (Wetherill 1995). 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 implicational scale. It only emphasizes the analysis on language domains: home, neighborhood, trading, education, traditional ceremonies and religion.

With the presumption that there is a widespread Lampungic language cluster, the questionnaire was administered in 27 villages considered to be native Lampungese villages that were sometimes located in remote areas. The twenty-seven villages are Kayu Agung Asli, Paku, Pulau Gemantung, Adumanis, Perjaya, Damarapura, 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. THE RESULT OF DATA ANALYSIS

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

### 3.1 Language use in domestic domains

The use of language in everyday life around the family is 100% Lampungic languages. There are some findings in some families, however, that they speak a mix of languages: Indonesian and Lampungic languages. The evidence is shown in the following table.

**Table 1 The use of language in the home domain**

Total Responses	Lampungic Language	Indonesian Language	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
54	54	-		6: occasional Indonesian language

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

### 3.2 Language use in the neighborhood domain

This study was administered in some remote areas where the residents are dominantly 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 other speakers such as Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese.

**Table 2 The use of language in the neighborhood domain**

Total Responses	Lampungic Language	Indonesian Language	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
54	45	-	-	9: including Lampungic Languages, Indonesian Language, 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 and that makes them 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 is on the small scale, like in the daily and weekly markets. Markets are the places where various ethnic groups gather to have business transactions and interactions in various languages.

**Table 3 The use of language in the trading domain**

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

The table indicates that there is some tendency of the natives 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 recesses. The results show the choices of various languages even though the evidence found the use of Indonesian is more dominant.

**Table 4 The use of language in the education domain**

Events	Total Responses	Lampung Language	Indonesian Language	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
Teaching 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	19	-	12		7 Indonesian and Lampungic language
Teaching at school	46	1	38	1: Indonesian and Palembang Malay	6: Indonesian and Lampungic languages
Kids playing together at recess	50	28	4	2 Palembang Malay	16: including Indonesian, Palembang Malay, and Lampungic languages

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 the Government's policy permits the local language to be used as the language of instruction in transition classes.

Meanwhile, interactions outside classes unofficially indicate an increase in the use of a mixture of languages: Indonesian, Palembang Malay and Lampungic languages. 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 ceremonies. In general, these traditional ceremonies are conducted in the local languages. The data, however, gathered from the native Lampungese shows a different phenomenon. They use Indonesian and mix languages such as Palembang Malay, but the use of Lampungic languages is still dominant.

**Table 5 Language use in the domain of traditional ceremonies**

Total Responses	Lampungic Language	Indonesian Language	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
54	39	7	-	8: including Indonesian, Palembang Malay, and Lampungic languages

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. This needs some further study regarding the change of cultural identities occurring in Lampungese society.

### 3.6 Language use in the religion domain

Religions determine the use of language as a means of communication. The Lampungese who are majority Muslim tend to use Arabic and Indonesian whenever they do religious ceremonies. This is shown in the following table.

**Table 6 Language use in the religion domain**

Events	Total Responses	Lampung Language	Indonesian Language	LWC or Arabic	Mix of Languages
Prayer (assumed corporate)	51	9	5	23 Arabic 3: Indonesian & Arabic	11: Indonesian, Arabic, and Lampungic languages
Sermon (at the mosques)	51	4	30	11: Indonesian and Arabic	6: including Indonesian, Palembang Malay, Lampungic languages, Arabic
Religious Ceremonies	14	5	5	-	4: including Indonesian, Lampungic languages, Arabic, Javanese

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 always be used in various religious ceremonies.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The previous analysis indicates that there are working divisions in the use of languages in various domains. The 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 kind of situation indicates a phenomenon of diglossia.

In the 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 have used a mix of languages. These phenomena, however, cannot be considered a shift of the Lampungese languages because the use of Lampungic is still dominant 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 other language, 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 stick some people into one ethnic group. 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 in the background, 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 makes Lampungic languages part of the materials in the school curriculum. This is official for all schools in Lampung from elementary to senior high schools.

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, will create some 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 only to get good scores in school?

Second, language is not meant for communication solely but has other functions in symbolizing the collective identity and the ethnolinguistic identity of 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, therefore, as a symbol 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 make Lampungic language 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 done in rural areas which are predominantly Lampungic native speakers, 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 a diglossia leakage and a pre-assumption of Lampungic language shift.

One of the efforts made by Lampung administrations through the National Department of Education was to begin a project on Reversing Language Shift by inserting Lampungic language

into the local curriculum. This effort might be regarded as cultural hegemony by presupposing homogeneous Lampung residents, but Lampungese are multiethnic, with 80 percents 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.

## REFERENCES

- Anderbeck, Karl, Charlie Hanawalt, Katubi. 2005. "Cheaper by Dozen? Reassessing Linguistic Diversity in the Lampungic Language Cluster". Paper presented at International Conference on Association for Linguistics Typology, Sixth Biennial Meeting, Padang, Indonesia, 21—25 July.
- Depdikbud. 1977. *Adat Istiadat Daerah Lampung*. Jakarta: Depdikbud.
- Edwards, John. 1985. *Language, Society and Identity*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Fasold, Ralph. 1984. *The Sociolinguistics of Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Grimes, Barbara Dix. 2005. "How Bad Indonesian becomes Good Kupang Malay: Articulating Regional Autonomy in west Timor". Paper presented at Fourth International Symposium of the Jurnal Antropologi Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia, 12-15 July.
- Gunarwan, Asim. 1994. "The Encroachment of Indonesian Upon The Home Domain of The Lampungic Language Use: A Study of The Possibility of a Minor Language Shift". Paper Presented at the Seventh International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics, Leiden University, The Netherlands, 22-27 August.
- Gunarwan, Asim. 1999. "Pembalikan Pergeseran Bahasa Lampung: Mungkinkah?" Paper presented at Seminar Bahasa dan Tulisan Lampung, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, 23 October.
- Gunarwan, Asim. 2001. "Beberapa Kasus Pergeseran dan Pemertahanan Bahasa: Implikasinya pada Pembinaan Bahasa Lampung". Paper presented at Seminar Nasional Pembinaan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya Daerah, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, 29-30 October.
- Hanawalt, Charlie. 2006. "Bitter or Sweet? The Vital Role of Sociolinguistic Survey in Lampungic Dialectology." Paper presented at Tenth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics, Puerto Princesa, Philippines, 17-20 January.
- Kramsch, Claire. 1998. *Language and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Levang, Patrice. 2003. *Ayo ke Tanah Sabrang*. Jakarta: KPG.
- Maalouf, Amin. 2004. *Atas Nama Identitas*. Translated from *In The Name of Identity* by Rony Agustinus. Yogyakarta: Resist Book.
- Puspawidjaja, Rizani et al. 1986. *Upacara Tradisional Daerah Lampung*. Lampung: Depdikbud.
- Spolsky, Bernard. 1998. *Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Walker, Dale F. 1975. "A Lexical Study of Lampung Dialects" in J.W.M. Verhaar (ed.). *Miscellaneous Studies in Indonesian and Languages in Indonesia*. pp 11-20. (NUSA Linguistics Studies of Indonesian and Other Languages in Indonesia, 1) Jakarta: Lembaga Bahasa Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya.
- Wetherill, G. Barrie. 1997. *Research Design and Analysis*. LinguaLinks version 5. (CD-Room). Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

The preceding document was presented at the Tenth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics (10-ICAL). To properly reference this work, please use the following format:

<LastName>, <FirstName>. 2006. <PaperTitle>. Paper presented at Tenth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics. 17-20 January 2006. Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines.  
<http://www.sil.org/asia/philippines/ical/papers.html>

For other papers that were presented at 10-ICAL, please visit <http://www.sil.org/asia/philippines/ical/papers.html>.