

When, Where, Why and with Who do We Speak Lio?: A Language Use and Language Attitude Survey

This work will investigate the results of an ongoing sociolinguistic survey of speakers of Lio, an Austronesian language spoken in Flores, Indonesia.

Data for this survey was collected using a Google Form, though the methodology did differ somewhat for different participants. The survey was dispersed to several What'sApp groups and Facebook groups for speakers to independently complete, but it was also completed with the help of university students during visits to Lio-speaking villages. This allowed the survey to be completed by individuals who did not have access to a laptop or smartphone, thus providing a more accurate picture of Lio speaker's use of the language and language attitudes, rather than limited respondents to those with this kind of access.

Preliminary results, with 86 adult participants, show that speakers are increasingly using either a mix of Indonesian and Lio, or even only Indonesian. A subset of domains covered by this survey are shown below in Table 1 (where percentages do not equal 100, it is because certain data points were excluded because participants did not match the domains below; i.e., participants who marked themselves as not being presently employed).

Domain	Lio	Indonesian	Lio and Indonesian
in the home	15%	12%	73%
with mother	40%	3%	56%
with father	29%	3%	54%
in the workplace	0%	30%	29%
in the market	6%	31%	63%
in a <i>warung</i> (restaurant)	1%	60%	38%

Table 1: selected results from a 2024 sociolinguistic survey

We can compare these figures to a sociolinguistic survey completed in 2015 by Simpen et al., with 100 adult participants. In their work, they showed that in conversations with family members, 75% of participants used only Lio inside the home. Our work shows this has been cut almost in half in less than ten years: even the highest percentage of Lio use, in conversations with their mothers (second row above), does not come close to this, at a mere 40%. Outside of the home, this percentage drops drastically (this includes participants living outside of urban centers, which were traditionally Lio-only speaking communities). This suggests that Lio is slowly being replaced by Indonesian, even in the home.

The language attitude portion of the survey, which consisted of 16 Likert-scale questions, does offer a somewhat more hopeful story. For example, 83% of participants choosing 'strongly agree' to the statement, 'Maintaining Lio as a means of communication and preserving it is important to me,' and to the statement 'Speaking Lio is antiquated,' 84% of participants selected 'strongly disagree.' However, to the statement 'If I have children, I will teach them to speak Lio,' only 38% of speakers responded with 'strongly agree,' which seems to somewhat contradict these other responses.

Data will still be collected for this survey until March 2025, and the responses of later participants would be included in our presentation. However, these preliminary results already seem to show that Lio language use has changed in the ten years since Simpen et. al's survey ten years ago. This may have implications for Lio's language vitality, which has until recently been considered "stable," largely due to its estimated 220,000 speakers (see Ethnologue). However, the

rapid shift in which domains speakers use exclusively Lio suggests that the languages vitality may not be as stable as it first appeared.

Selected References:

Simpen, I Wayan, Ida Bagus Putra Yadnya, Aron Meko Mbete, A.A. Putu Putra, Gek Wulan Novi Utami, & Nissa Puspitaning Adni (2015). Fungsi social budaya Bahasa Lio (Socio-cultural functions of the Lio language). Research report, funded by the Linguistics Masters program at Universitas Udayana.