# Multilingualism in eastern Indonesia: the case of Alorese
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About 600 years ago, the Alorese migrated eastwards from Flores and its offshore islands and settled on the coastal areas of the islands of Alor and Pantar, in eastern Indonesia (see Map 1). These islands were, and still are, inhabited by Papuan language speakers, such as Blagar, Teiwa, Kaera and Adang, with whom the Alorese soon came into contact.
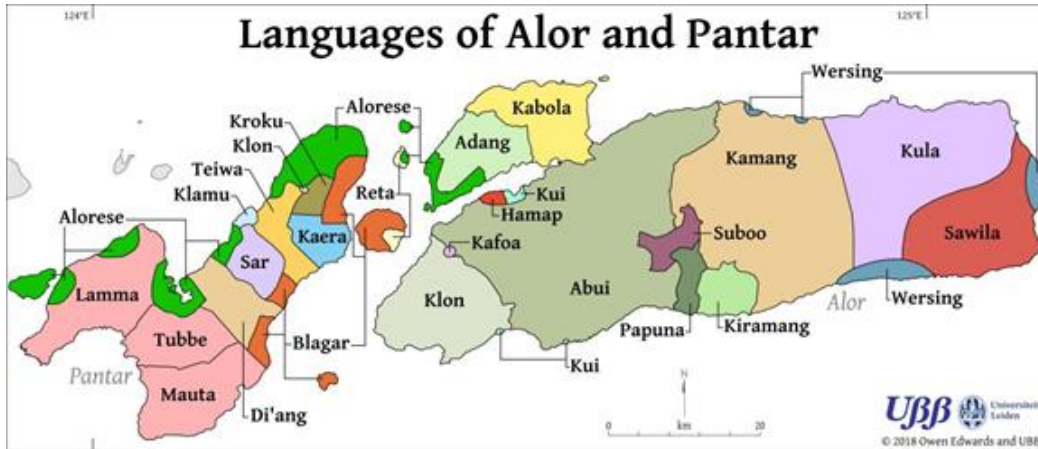
MAP 1. ALORESE AND THE NEIGHBOURING ALOR-PANTAR LANGUAGES

The coastal Alorese intermarried and had trading relations with different groups of Papuan speakers. Furthermore, they acted as intermediaries between on the one hand the inland Papuan groups, and foreign traders as well as the colonial Dutch government on the other hand. The traces of this multilingual contact scenario can be seen in the Alorese language today.

This paper illustrates the effects of this multilingual setting on Alorese, by describing two types of outcome: (i) grammatical convergence of Alorese and the Papuan languages, which is generally associated with childhood bilingualism, and (ii) morphological simplification, which is generally associated with adult second language (L2) learning (Trudgill 2011, Ross 2013). These two outcomes indicate that Alorese underwent both processes of language acquisition.

One example of grammatical convergence that occurred in Alorese (outcome i) is the plural word *hire,* as illustrated in example (1), where *hire* 'PL' modifies the noun *mato* 'frog'.

(1)   Mato   anang   hire   kado   kluar
       frog   small   PL   jump   go.out
       '(The) small frogs jump out.'

Based on a comparison between Alorese and its closest relative Lamaholot, we know that Alorese did not have a plural word before it came into contact with the Papuan languages of Alor and Pantar. The plural word *hire* emerged as a result of contact-induced grammaticalization, whereby an inherited third person plural form (*si-ida) developed into a plural word analogous to the plural words used in neighboring Papuan languages (Moro 2018). This functional re-mapping, whereby the grammatical category of one language (plurality) is mapped onto a morphological unit of another language (the 3PL pronoun) is usually found in young people's speech (Sánchez 2004). Since it is mostly bilingual children who are able to map new grammatical categories on indigenous morphological forms, I argue that *hire* emerged in the speech of bilingual Alorese-Papuan children.

An example of morphological simplification (outcome ii) is the loss of the inflectional morphology that took place in Alorese over the last centuries. When compared to its closest relative Lamaholot, Alorese lost almost all the morphology that was once present in their shared ancestor language (Klamer 2011). Lamaholot marks subject agreement on verbs. There are two different subject paradigms: a set of prefixes marking an A subject; and a set of suffixes marking the S subject. Alorese has entirely lost the S suffixes, and has reduced the number of verbs that can take an A prefixes (from 20 to 8 verbs). Synchronic data collected by the author from Alorese L2 speakers show that even this last vestige of productive inflectional morphology is undergoing simplification. Even those L2 speakers who have been exposed to Alorese for over 10 years exhibit morphological variability in the use of agreement prefixes. The ongoing simplification pattern attested among L2 speakers is to extend one prefix to the entire paradigm.

Combining historical comparative data with experimental data from L2 speakers of Alorese, we have evidence that Alorese was first used in small-scale bilingual communities, and only later on when the Alorese community became larger and more fluid, the language started to undergo a significant simplification process due to the considerable amount of adult second language learning.

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