

Lio kinship terminology

Arwen Fluit, Grace B. Wivell & Fransiskus X. Mbeté

Abstract. This work focuses on kinship terms in Lio, an understudied Austronesian language spoken in Flores, Indonesia. We describe the Lio kinship terms and compare them to available data on other nearby Austronesian languages. Preliminary observations show examples of alternate generation terms which have not been discussed in previous literature. These alternate generation terms are also divided by gender, a quality that has not been discussed in the Central Flores languages literature.

Keywords. kinship; alternate generation; Austronesian

1. Introduction. In this work, we explore the kinship terms of Lio Aku, a dialect of Lio, an Austronesian language spoken in Flores, Indonesia. We describe the Lio kinship terms present in available data on PARADISEC (Yanti 2019), and compare them to available data on other nearby Austronesian languages. Though this work is largely preliminary, we have observed examples of alternate generation terms which, to our knowledge, have not been discussed in previous literature on Lio. These alternate generation terms are also divided by gender, a quality that has not been discussed in literature that does mention similar terms in other Central Flores languages.

We also propose suggestions for collecting kinship terms, which one of the authors will implement in upcoming fieldwork on Lio, and which we believe can be utilized in the documentation of languages with similar phenomena.

2. Lio language. Lio is an Austronesian language spoken in Central Flores, Indonesia by 220,000 speakers according to the 2009 Indonesian census (Eberhard et. al. 2020). The Lio speaking region of Flores can be seen in Figure 1.

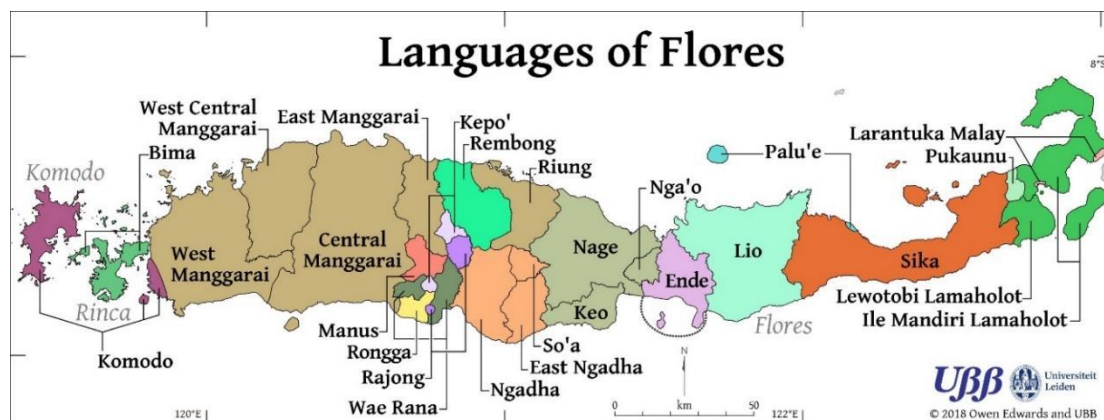


Figure 1. Lio Region of Flores, Indonesia. Map provided by Unit Bahasa dan Budaya (Language and Culture Unit) Kupang, Indonesia

The members of the community in which the data for this project was collected identified three dialects of Lio: Lio Ja’o, Lio Nga’o, and Lio Aku. Sawardo et al.’s (1987) sketch grammar of the language lists five major dialects, including: Lio Tana Kunu, Lio Mbu, Lio Mbengu, Lio Mego, and Lio Aku. Members of the community whose language is considered here have self-identified their dialect as Lio Aku.

3. Methodology. The data comes from a corpus for which fieldwork was completed in the summer of 2019 as part of the Linguistic Fieldwork and Documentation Training in Indonesia Program, of which the second and third authors of this paper were participants; the corpus is available on the PARADISEC (Pacific And Regional Archive for DIgital Sources in Endangered Cultures) database (Yanti 2019). The corpus includes different linguistic texts, including conversations, word lists and monologues. Monologues and conversations were selected for this study, as we were interested in how kinship terms were used in naturalistic speech: these texts largely focused on traditional tales, personal narratives, and descriptions of daily life and cultural practices in the community. Texts were only included in this study if both transcriptions and translations of the text were available.

Data from 9 speakers of Lio Aku was analyzed: 3 women (ages 36, 58, and 66) and 6 men (ages 20, 23, 52, 57, 65, and 68). They all live in the village of Wolondopo, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. All of the speakers consider themselves bilingual in at least Indonesian. Additionally, one speaker (23M) is also a fluent speaker of English, Tetun, and Kupang Malay, and another speaker (20M), has some English fluency.

We also had access to field notes completed during this data collection, and some kinship terms were also pulled from these notes.

4. Results and discussion. Our exploration of Lio Aku kinship terms revealed that Lio has alternate generations, several terms for siblings and cousins, household terms, and kinship terms used for individuals outside of the consanguineous and affinal family.

4.1. ALTERNATE GENERATIONS. In Lio, the same word is used for 'mother' and 'daughter', because each of these individuals is exactly one generation away from the speaker. This pattern is called alternate generations: a phenomenon in which the same kinship terminology applies to multiple generations of a family if they have the same generational distance from the speaker. See examples (1) and (2) for an illustration¹.

- (1) *ine* *aku* *haki* *Wolondopo*
mother 1SG.Poss husband Wolondopo
 ‘My mother married a man from Wolondopo’

(Yanti 2019, CON002, 06)

¹ Throughout this work, we will use the preferred orthography of the community from which we used language data. This orthography corresponds almost exactly to that described in Elias (2018), with one notable exception: in the orthography here è is a schwa and e is an /e/ while the opposite is true in Elias.

- (2) *kèma bhèribhèri ine*
 work good-good **daughter**
 ‘Good job, daughter.’

(Yanti 2019, MON009, 735)

This is present in Lio, however previous literature on Lio has not mentioned it. We see alternate generation terminology in Lio going out at least two generations (parents/children, grandparents/grandchildren), likely three generations, with fewer examples present of great-grandparents/great-grandchildren. This alternating generations is demonstrated in Figure 2.

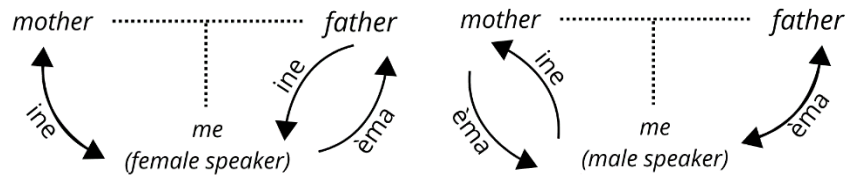


Figure 2. The kinship terms for mother and father, for a female and a male speaker

Lio kinship terminology appears heavily gendered along a female/male binary, with no neuter or ungendered variant of the alternate generation terminology observed. To pluralize these terms and refer to a cross-gender group of family elders, Lio sets the terms next to each other. Examples include *ine èma* ‘parents’ or ‘village elders’ (lit. ‘mother father’), *mamo babo* ‘grandparents’ (lit. ‘grandmother grandfather’), and *mama bapa* ‘parents’ (lit. ‘mother father’). Usually the feminine term comes first, such as in the examples in (3) and (4), with a few examples of the opposite seen in the construction *bapa mama*. These terms appear to be paired together, so while *ine* and *mama* both refer to mothers generally, there is no evidence of them being used in connection to the male counterpart of the other (ie. **ine bapa*, **mama èma*).

- (3) *ine èma ngèta si'i so tu sore guru ruti nata*
mother father 3PL.Poss request say bring exchange ring say betel.nut
 ‘And then their parents tell them to bring rings and betel nut.’

(Yanti 2019, MON004, 7-8)

- (4) *babo mamo, eo mbe'o daki gha ina*
grandfather grandmother REL know light here this
 ‘...grandparents, who are able to light this candle...’

(Yanti 2019, MON004, 457)

Some kinship terminology for parents does not currently show evidence of following the alternate generation structure: *mama*, *bapa*, and *dede*. *Bapa* may be borrowed from Indonesian, while the origin for *mama* is unclear, though it may be derived from one of the European colonizing languages that have been spoken in the region, such as Dutch or Portuguese.

Ine and *èma* are used consistently to refer to daughters and sons, but often one’s children, especially younger children, will be referred to using a third ungendered term outside of the

alternate generation paradigm: *ana* ‘child.’ Further work is needed to determine if the alternating generation kinship terms such as *ine* and *èma* are only used for adult children.

While our current evidence is very limited, it does suggest that all same gender family members of the same generation can be referred to using the same terminology. For example, one’s parent’s sister is also called *mama* in Lio, as in (5), even while *mama* is generally understood as mother.

- (5) *kai mai dèki lau one èbe wo mama tua aku ne*
 3SG come then down.mountain house 3PL FILL **aunt** old 1SG also
 ‘Then he came to my aunt’s house.’

(Yanti 2019, MON018, 109)

A summary of the kinship terms discussed in this section can be found in Table 1 below.

<i>Kinship Term</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>ine</i>	mother/daughter
<i>mama</i>	mother
<i>mamo</i>	grandmother
<i>nene</i>	great grandmother
<i>èma</i>	father/son
<i>eja</i>	male relative
<i>om</i>	uncle
<i>bapa</i>	father
<i>babo</i>	grandfather
<i>ame</i>	father/son
<i>èda</i>	father/son-in-law; uncle
<i>èmbu</i>	great grandfather
<i>dede</i>	father
<i>ana</i>	child

Table 1. Kinship terms discussed in section 4.1

Alternate generations have been discussed in the literature on Austronesian languages more generally (Blust 1980, Hage 1999). Alternate generation terms have also been observed in other Central Flores languages, including Keo (Forth 1994) and Nage (Forth 1996). These alternating generations have been observed up until the fifth generation in these languages, well beyond what we have observed in the data we considered. However, quite different from what we see in Lio, there is no record of alternating generations being observed in the first generation in either Keo or Nage (Forth 1994, 1996): rather, the words that seem to correspond to *ine* and *ame*, themselves likely comparable to proto-AN *(t)-ina ‘mother,’ and *(t)-ama ‘father’ (Blust 1980), are only described as being used to refer to parents. Furthermore, since the work on Keo and Nage focused solely on male speakers, and thus recorded terms only for the male ego, or male speaker, it is unclear whether any such gender distinctions exist in these languages, as we have observed in Lio.

4.2. SIBLING AND COUSIN TERMINOLOGY. Kinship terminology for family members of the same generation as the speaker comes in two varieties: gender-neutral age-relative, and gender-relative age-neutral. For gender neutral terms, Lio has *aji*, younger sibling, the corollary *ka'e*, older sibling, likely derived from proto-AN *kaka and *hua(n)ji. There also exists *ane*, as in (6), which appears to be a more general word for ‘sibling,’ but we did not see widespread use of it in our data.

- (6) *miu wèta ane di henga*
 2PL sister **sibling** also a.lot
 ‘You also have a lot of siblings.’

(Yanti 2019 MON004, 352)

Forms which resemble *ane* in Keo and Nage have been cited most often as referring to a sister’s child (Forth 1994, 1996). We do not see evidence of this in the data we considered, but we acknowledge that instances of *ane* were limited.

There are also several terms that were originally recorded in field notes from the 2019 project on Lio as terminology for cousins (Yanti 2019). However, data from the recordings shows that many of these terms are also used for siblings and siblings-in-law, strengthening the theory that Lio kinship terminology is equivalent across the entirety of one generation. These gendered sibling/cousin terms rely upon both the gender of the speaker and the gender of the referent. A female speaker will call her male cousin *hana* and her female cousin *ipa*, and a male speaker will call his male cousin *aju* and his female cousin *wèta*. We also observed *ipa* and *wèta* used to refer to one’s sister or sister-in-law.

- (7) *ipa aku sogo jara ola- kobe sala*
in-law 1SG pay.dept horse NMLZ- night wrong
 ‘My sister brought a horse as a bribe at night.’

(Yanti 2019, MON018, 290)

- (8) *aku tamat kelas ènam samasama no'o wèta neku eo kelima*
 1SG graduate class six same with **sister** 1SGPoss REL fifth
 ‘I graduated with my sister who was in the fifth grade.’

(Yanti 2019, MON001, 24)

The kinship terms discussed in this section are summarized in Table 2 below.

<i>Kinship Term</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>aji</i>	younger sibling
<i>ane</i>	sibling
<i>ka'e</i>	older sibling
<i>hana</i>	male cousin (female speaker)
<i>eju</i>	male cousin (male speaker)
<i>wèta</i>	female cousin (male speaker)
<i>ipa</i>	female cousin (female speaker)
<i>ipa</i>	sister-in-law
<i>wèta</i>	sister

Table 2. Kinship terms discussed in section 4.2

Much work has been completed regarding Eastern Indonesian kinship systems, and much of this work is concerned with who the ‘wife-givers’ and ‘wife-takers’ are in a given society (Blust 1980, 1993, Forth 1994, 1996, Howell 1990, 2002). Linguistically, much of this work focuses on the terminology used to refer to cousins, as it is generally agreed that matrilineal cousin-marriage was of great importance to most Central Flores cultures prior to the introduction of Catholicism (Forth 1994, 1996, Howell 1990, 2002)

Signe Howell argues that Lio culture is “patrilineal... practicing matrilineal cross-cousin marriage” (1990, pg. 259), and further suggests that androgyny may be an important concept to understand gendered values in Lio culture (159). While she largely focuses on cultural practices, she does point to that the terms *weta* (sister of a brother) and *nara* (brother of a sister), implies symmetry in sibling relationships.

The data we considered lack any instances of *nara* at all, and generally lack instances of kinship terms that refer to cousins. So, while it is an important and interesting question as to whether Lio parallels other Central Flores languages, we do not presently have enough information to know what patterns exist.

4.3. HOUSEHOLD TERMINOLOGY. Generally, kinship terminology used for consanguineous family members is also used for affinal family members, relatives through marriage. Sometimes kin terms will be modified with the inclusion of the word *tu'a*, translated as ‘in-law’. *Tu'a* can come before another kin term, as in (9) or it can stand alone, as in (10). It is also possible for someone to refer to their in-laws without a qualifying term, as in (11)

- (9) *tu'a èma Bene ghea nea*
in-law father Bene there also
 ‘My father-in-law over there’

(Yanti 2019, MON004 175)

- (10) *lama se tu'a kau ra'i dow a ghele mai ina*
 quick IMP **in-law** 2SG come already up.mountain come this
 ‘Come quickly, your daughter-in-law is arriving.’

(Yanti 2019, MON018 215)

- (11) *dede so, "o ine mai se."*
 father say oh **daughter** come IMP
 'My father-in-law said, 'Come here, daughter.'

(Yanti 2019, MON 018, 225)

The words for husband and wife are identical to the words for man and woman. *Haki* is man and husband, and *fai* is woman and wife. The word for person *ata*, usually precedes *haki* or *fai* when referring to a man or woman; used independently, these terms refer specifically to a husband or wife.

Another term related to the household and affinal family is *kk* [kaka], the head of household; this is borrowed from the Indonesian *kepala keluarga*, translating directly to head of house.

<i>Kinship Term</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>fai</i>	wife; woman
<i>haki</i>	husband; man
<i>tu'a</i>	in-law
<i>kk</i>	head of household

Table 3. Kinship terms discussed in section 4.3

4.4. USE OF KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY OUTSIDE THE FAMILY. Lio sees widespread use of kinship terminology outside of the biological and married family. *Aji* is commonly used to refer to unrelated children, and children will use *ka'e* for young adults. The masculine terminology, primarily *èma*, *ame*, *eja*, and *om* (possibly borrowed from Indonesian), are used to be polite and friendly with men that are complete strangers to the speaker.

- (12) *dèki latu ata ka'e ina kai nosi so*
 then EXIST person **older.sibling** this 3SG say say
 'And then there was a man who said...'

(Yanti 2019, MON001, 11)

- (13) *aji, jaga ola- mèsu*
younger.sibling be.careful NOM- fall
 'Be careful, you will fall!'

(Yanti 2019, MON001, 13)

In a fairytale shared by one of the participants, kinship terminology sees significant use outside of a family context in its dialogue. A wizard kidnaps a young woman, Bunga, the daughter of a king. While Bunga is in the household of the wizard, Bunga calls the wizard *èma*, her father (14). The wizard in turn calls Bunga *ine* (15), though this may sometimes be understood as "my dear" rather than mother or daughter, implying that this usage has a connotation of affection. The wizard also calls Bunga his daughter using the term *ana* when speaking of her to other people (16).

- (14) *ta'uke èma ra'i nea*
 afraid **father** arrive also
 'I am afraid if my father (the wizard) should arrive.'

(Yanti 2019 MON003, 113)

- (15) *Bunga ine wau musu.kake dèma*
 Bunga **daughter** smell foreigner correct
 'Bunga I smell a foreigner.'

(Yanti 2019, MON003, 96)

- (16) *dèmi kau tau ngere ina ma'e ganggu ana nèku*
 if 2SG want like this NEG.IMP bother **child** 1SGPoss
 'If you want to, so be it, but do not bother my child.'

(Yanti 2019, MON003, 124)

When Raja Lobonama—the young hero who has come to rescue Bunga and make her his wife—arrives and meets the wizard, he calls the man *babo* 'grandfather' when he is trying to be respectful and not make the wizard angry with him, as seen in example (17). The wizard reciprocates Raja Lobonama's usage of *babo*, calling him grandson (18).

- (17) *babo, pati muri we'e aku bèga, aku mèra neku no'o kau*
grandfather, give life just 1SG EMPH, 1SG live 1SGPoss with 2SG
 'Let me live, for I want to live with you.'

(Yanti 2019, MON003 119-120)

- (18) *molo ngere ina bèga babo, mai da gha no'o jajake ngere ina*
 correct like this EMPH **grandson**, come to here with talk like this
 'It is right (appropriate) that you and I talk like this.'

(Yanti 2019 MON003 134-135)

Our data pertaining to the use of kinship terminology outside of one's family is primarily from male speakers and their interactions with other men. Due to this limitation, we have been unable to determine if feminine kin terms such as *ine* are used in the same manner.

5. Implications for fieldwork. Having a preliminary sketch of Lio kinship terms is, in and of itself, of value to future fieldwork, given the complexity of kinship systems (Dousset 2014). Wordlists have often been relied upon to elicit kinship terms, but that does not always result in the terms that typologists are interested in, largely due to wordlists being rather Euro-centric (Dockum 2020).

We believe that the kinship maps we have created can also be used in elicitation of kinship terms. We have created blank maps that can be presented to speakers, such as the examples in figure 3, and hope to present these to speakers in order to elicit missing kinship terms.

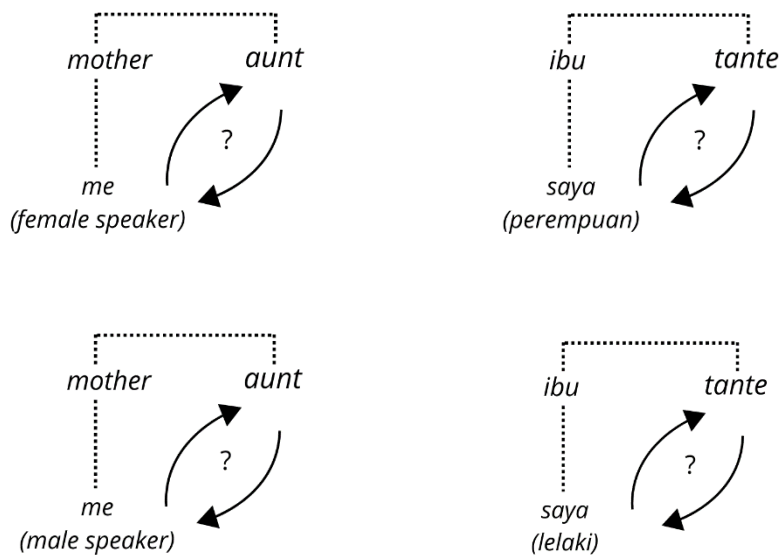


Figure 3. Kinship maps as they may be used for elicitation. Only the Indonesian language maps would be used: the English is merely provided here for illustration

By presenting speakers with these maps, which illustrate the relationship between the speaker and the family member for whom we are eliciting the kinship term, we hope to capture kinship terms more accurately in the elicitation sessions. We acknowledge that this does not completely eliminate the effects of translation that can be of concern in documentation (Bower 2015, Majid 2012), as the maps do use Indonesian terms. However, Lio-only kinship maps can also be provided in later sessions to confirm that we have elicited the right terms.

Equally important as to *how* kinship terms are elicited is from *whom* these terms are elicited as well. We were able to identify a certain gendering of alternate generation terms because both the recordings and fieldwork notes included sessions with women; comparison to other languages in the region is then difficult because most of this work focused on men (Forth 1994, 1996). It is of the utmost importance that future documentation focused on Lio kin terms be balanced in terms of speaker gender and age, to ensure that a full picture can be painted of these terms.

6. Conclusion. It is our hope that this present research demonstrates the importance of continued work on these languages, with a diverse range of speakers, so that a full understanding of these kinship terms can be reached. This work only begins to scratch the surface of how kinship terms are used in Lio Aku, but nonetheless has shown that Lio exhibits alternate generation kinship terms, like other Central Flores languages, and these alternate generations are divided along gendered lines, for which we are not aware of any evidence in other Central Flores Languages, though this may be due to previous research focusing largely on the male ego, while ours is the first to include kinship terms from the female ego.

References

- Bowern, Claire. 2015. *Linguistic fieldwork: A practical guide* (2nd ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dousset, Laurent. 2014. Understanding human relations (kinship systems). In Nicholas Thieberger (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of linguistic fieldwork*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (24th ed.). Dallas, TX: SIL International.
- Dockum, Rikker. 2020. Stability and change in parental sibling kin terms in the Tai languages. Paper presented at Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (SEALS) 31st Annual Meeting, Hawai'i.
- Elias, Alexander. 2018. *Lio and the Central Flores languages*. Leiden: Leiden University MA thesis.
- Forth, Gregory. 1994. Keo kin terms. *Anthropos* 89(1/3). 95–109. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40463845>.
- Forth, Gregory. 1996. A comparative analysis of Nage kin terms; Western and eastern variations. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152(2). 204–235.
- Howell, Signe. 1990. Husband/wife or brother/sister as the key relationship in Lio Kinship and Sociosymbolic relations. *Ethnos*, 55(3–4). 248–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.1990.9981417>.
- Howell, Signe. 2002. Nesting, eclipsing and hierarchy: Processes of gendered values among Lio. *Social Anthropology* 10(2). 159–172. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0964028202000113>.
- P. Sawardo, Wakidi, Tarno, Y. Lita, S. Kusharyanto. 1987. Struktur Bahasa Lio. Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Yanti (collector). 2019. Recordings of various texts in Lio, a language spoken in Ende, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. <https://doi.org/10.26278/5f35639ea0bcc>.