

Research Article

The Language Contact Phenomenon between *Panglima Laot* and Coastal Society in the West Aceh Region

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Abstract

This study explores the phenomenon of language contact between *Panglima Laot*, fishers, and government representatives in West Aceh, Indonesia. The research aims to analyze how linguistic interaction occurs in the context of policy communication within coastal communities and to identify the sociolinguistic forms of interference, integration, code-switching, and code-mixing that emerge during such interactions. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through interviews and field observations involving government officials, *Panglima Laot*, and local fishers. The findings reveal that *Panglima Laot* functions as a linguistic and socio-cultural bridge, facilitating communication between the government and the fishing community. Language contact occurs due to differences in linguistic backgrounds Indonesian used by officials and Acehnese or the Jamu dialect used by fishers. The study shows that code-switching and code-mixing serve as effective strategies for ensuring mutual understanding, while interference and integration reflect linguistic adaptation and cultural assimilation. These linguistic practices not only improve policy comprehension but also strengthen social cohesion and trust between stakeholders. The research highlights the significance of local language and traditional leadership in enhancing communication effectiveness and ensuring the successful implementation of government policies in coastal regions.

Keywords

panglima laot; language contact; coastal society

Introduction

Government policy in the capture fisheries sector constitutes a crucial effort to ensure the sustainability of marine resources while enhancing the welfare of coastal communities. Nevertheless, the implementation of such policies frequently encounters obstacles related to public comprehension, particularly within coastal regions. One of the determining factors influencing this issue is the language

employed in the communication of policy measures. As a medium of communication, language serves a pivotal role in bridging understanding between governmental authorities and the populace; however, when used inappropriately, it may instead hinder the successful realization of policy objectives. Many fishers residing in coastal areas possess limited formal education and predominantly utilize local languages in their daily interactions. Hence, it is essential to examine how language is utilized by the government and intermediaries in conveying policy information, as well as how these languages are understood by coastal communities.

Government policy serves as an essential instrument in the management of the public sector, including the capture fisheries sector. In Indonesia, this sector holds a strategic role both economically and ecologically, as it contributes to national income, food security, and the sustainability of natural resources. However, government policies are often difficult to comprehend and implement by actors in the field, particularly traditional fishers and small-scale fishing industries. To bridge this gap, the use of language as a medium of policy communication becomes a crucial aspect. Communication, as a medium for policy understanding, refers to the process of disseminating information, providing education, and fostering comprehension of policies among all stakeholders. In the capture fisheries sector, this process involves the transmission of messages from the government to the community—especially fishers—concerning regulations, rules, and policies related to fisheries resource management, permissible fishing gear, fishing zones, and conservation efforts. Nonetheless, challenges frequently arise regarding how these policies are communicated. Communication barriers between the government and fishing communities may stem from various factors, such as low literacy levels, language differences, limited access to information, and negative perceptions of regulations perceived as burdensome. Therefore, this study focuses on the role of language as a medium for understanding capture fisheries policies, with the aim of offering solutions to the communication challenges that occur.

The dissemination of government policies in coastal areas, such as in West Aceh, often encounters complex communication challenges. One recurring phenomenon is the low level of public understanding of the Indonesian language used in the delivery of government policies. Coastal communities, who are generally more accustomed to using local languages in their daily lives, often find it difficult to comprehend policies articulated in formal and technical language. This situation has implications for the low level of public participation in government policies and programs, such as economic empowerment, health, and environmental initiatives that are, in fact, designed to improve their welfare (Muslim, 2019). Within the context of coastal communities, particularly in West Aceh, the role of *Panglima Laot* is highly significant. *Panglima Laot*, as a traditional leader who holds strong influence within fishing communities, is responsible for regulating marine activities and maintaining social and environmental balance in coastal areas (Nasution, 2020). Government policy dissemination that involves *Panglima Laot* tends to be more readily accepted by the community, as this figure is regarded as a guardian of tradition and a reliable source of information. Moreover, *Panglima Laot* possesses the ability to interpret and convey government policies in language that is more accessible to the local population, thereby bridging communication gaps (Rahman, 2018). Another observable phenomenon is that when government policy dissemination does not involve customary figures such as *Panglima Laot*, many policies fail to be effectively implemented in practice. For instance, environmental programs or policies designed to protect coastal ecosystems are often neglected because the community does not fully grasp their urgency. Conversely, when *Panglima Laot* delivers these programs through dialogue or customary meetings, the information is more easily received and understood, thereby encouraging active community participation in program implementation (Sari, 2021).

Language, in this context, is not merely a tool of communication but also a means of building trust between the government and the community. The use of local or regional languages conveyed through the *Panglima Laot* can strengthen community acceptance of government policies. By involving traditional leaders, the government can ensure that key messages are communicated in ways that are more relevant and aligned with the needs of local communities (Budianto, 2020). Therefore, this study



seeks to explore how the use of language contact, accompanied by the role of *Panglima Laot*, can enhance the effectiveness of public understanding of government policies in the coastal areas of West Aceh. A communication strategy grounded in local wisdom is expected to ensure that coastal communities receive and comprehend government policies effectively, thereby facilitating their optimal implementation (Sulaiman, 2022).

Research on policy communication that focuses on the use of the speaker's language is essential, as the success of policy implementation largely depends on the extent to which the public understands, accepts, and engages in its execution. According to Rafalita et al. (2024), multiple aspects of suitable language usage can impact the implementation of public policy, including clear language, context-appropriate language, and transparent language. They also explained that when the language aligns with the situation, it can enhance public engagement in the policy-making process. Clear communication aids in clarifying the decision-making process and the execution of public policies, which ultimately boosts public confidence. Consequently, the assessment and management procedures in governmental performance can operate more efficiently and yield more accurate results. For a policy to be carried out as intended, implementers must not only receive the operational guidelines, but the communication itself must also be conveyed clearly (Posangi, Lengkong, & Dengo, 2020). Poor communication may lead to misinterpretation, resistance, and even policy violations. Conversely, effective communication can foster broader acceptance and active participation, ultimately supporting the sustainability of the policy sector itself. Cahya et al. (2024) claims that mastery and effective use of the Indonesian language are essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring transparency and equal access to information for all members of society. Indonesian serves as a key medium for facilitating clear communication between the government and citizens, especially in conveying public information and policy directives. How well the language is used influences not only how people interpret government policies but also helps foster greater awareness of social, political, and environmental issues. However, the use of regional languages helps the government to disseminate policies more efficiently, especially among populations that maintain these languages in daily life (Putra et al., 2024). Due to their vital role, the preservation of regional languages is essential to ensure they continue to serve as a bridge of communication between the government and local communities.

Based on the author's observation, the *Panglima Laot* serves as an extension of the government in conveying regulatory policies related to capture fisheries and in helping to preserve marine sustainability. The use of language contact in policy dissemination aims to make communication more effective and easily understood by the people of West Aceh. Through this study, it is expected that the forms of language contact employed by the *Panglima Laot* in communicating with the community can be identified to address existing communication barriers, thereby enabling fisheries policies to be better understood, more effectively implemented, and sustained, while improving fishers' welfare without neglecting conservation principles. Based on the background described above, this study is entitled "The Language Contact Phenomenon between *Panglima Laot* and Coastal Society in the West Aceh Region".

Policy communication is a crucial aspect of the public policy implementation process. According to Hoogwood and Gunn (1978), one of the key prerequisites for successful policy implementation is effective communication and coordination. In this context, language serves as the primary medium through which policies are conveyed. Within coastal regions, communities are often more accustomed to using local languages rather than the formal Indonesian language commonly employed in policy dissemination. This highlights the importance of linguistic adaptation to ensure that policy messages are optimally understood. Indonesian society in general tends to be bilingual, with individuals capable of using two languages alternately in communication. This is particularly evident among the people of West Aceh, who typically use their local or mother tongue when interacting within their immediate social environment. The same applies to interactions or communications within regional activities involving groups that share the same ethnicity and language background. The use of the Indonesian language, on the other hand, is often preferred when communicating with speakers from different ethnic groups to



avoid misunderstandings. This phenomenon is referred to as *bilingualism*; furthermore, when individuals are capable of using three or more languages alternately, they are considered *polyglots*. Bilingualism refers to the use of two languages or linguistic codes. To be able to use two languages effectively, one must have proficiency in both—the first being the mother tongue or native language, and the second being another language acquired subsequently (Chaer & Agustina, 2004:84). The use of language in a multilingual society will give rise to language choice (Setyari, et al., 2016). In his opinion, Fasold (1984) said that language choice arises due to language contact, social contact, and cultural contact, so that there are groups of speakers who have the ability to choose a language or language code in certain speech events. Anggana (2025:302) simply states that language contact is defined as the intersection between two or more different languages.

An open speech community that interacts with other speech communities will inevitably experience language contact. According to Thomason (2001), language contact refers to the use of more than one language in the same place and at the same time. When language contact occurs in communication, it may give rise to linguistic phenomena such as interference, integration, code-switching, and code-mixing (Chaer & Agustina, 2004:84). These phenomena will be further elaborated in the following section.

1. Interference

Kridalaksana (1993:84) defines *interference* as the use of linguistic elements from another language by an individual bilingual speaker within a particular language. The phenomenon of interference refers to the incorporation of elements from another language into speech, which is generally considered an error because it deviates from the grammatical rules or norms of the language being used (Chaer & Agustina, 2004:120). Interference is also used to describe changes that occur within a language system as a result of contact with elements of another language, as produced by bilingual speakers (Weinreich in Chaer & Agustina, 2004:120).

2. Integration

According to Mackey, as cited in Chaer and Agustina (2004:128), *integration* refers to linguistic elements from another language that are used within a particular language and are regarded as having become part of that language. These elements are no longer considered borrowings or loanwords. The process of integration requires a considerable amount of time, as the integrated elements must be adapted in terms of pronunciation, spelling, and grammatical conventions.

3. Code-Switching

Appel, as cited in Chaer and Agustina (2004:107), defines *code-switching* as the phenomenon of shifting language use due to changes in situation or context. Hymes, as cited in Chaer and Agustina (2004:107–108), explains that code-switching does not only occur between different languages but also among varieties or styles within the same language. According to Aslinda and Syafyahya (2010:85), factors that contribute to code-switching include who is speaking, in which language, to whom, when, and for what purpose.

4. Code-Mixing

Code-mixing refers to a linguistic situation in which a speaker mixes two or more languages or language varieties within a single speech act, without any external situational factors requiring such mixing (Nababan, 1986:32). Pranowo (1996:12) explains that code-mixing involves the use of two or more languages by consistently inserting elements of one language into another. Thelander, as cited in Chaer and Agustina (2004:115), states that code-mixing occurs when, within a speech event, the clauses or phrases used consist of mixed elements, and each clause or phrase no longer serves its distinct grammatical function. Similarly, Fasold, as cited in Chaer and Agustina (2004:115), asserts that code-mixing takes place when a speaker uses a word or phrase from another language within their utterance.



Juariah, et al. (2020) concluded that when someone communicates using code-mixing and code-switching, they are influenced by several factors, including background and attitude, linguistic background, the limitations of the speaking partner's use of code, the presence of a third speaker, and so on.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects by describing them in words and language within a specific natural context, utilizing naturalistic methods (Moeleong, 2011). The research was conducted in coastal areas characterized by fishing communities, such as West Aceh Regency, which is surrounded by coastal regions. The selection of informants in this study was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, which is determined based on specific intentions and aligned with the objectives of the research topic. There were five informants in this study. The informants selected for this study consist of representatives from the West Aceh Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, extension officers from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, three person of *Panglima Laot*, and fishers.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and field observations. Interviews were conducted with fishers, community leaders or *Panglima Laot*, and government officials or extension officers involved in policy dissemination. According to Moleong (2012), an interview is a conversation conducted with a specific purpose between two parties. The interview technique used in this study was the *in-depth interview* method, aimed at obtaining detailed insights regarding policy implementation. The researcher conducted interviews using an interview guide within relevant institutions. Informants provided their responses honestly and without any external intervention. Observation was carried out to examine communication interactions occurring in the field. Data analysis is carried out through three processes, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. After the data were collected, the researcher performed data reduction by selecting relevant information for the study, which was then presented in accordance with the research objectives, followed by drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data. Accurate research results are obtained from these three processes.

Results and Discussion

Referring to the research problem, interviews conducted during the study revealed instances of language contact among Acehnese, Jamu (a local dialect), and Indonesian in interactions between *Panglima Laot*, fishers, and government representatives (departments/extension officers). The *Panglima Laot* serves as a linguistic and sociocultural bridge between the two groups. This language contact occurs because the three social groups—government officials, *Panglima Laot*, and fishers—possess different linguistic backgrounds, yet must communicate within the context of fisheries policy. According to Abdul Chaer (2003, 2010), language contact arises when two linguistic communities interact continuously, leading to phenomena such as interference, integration, code-switching, and code-mixing. Furthermore, Chaer explains that language contact can influence comprehension in the communication process. Therefore, this study is analyzed based on the theory of language contact developed by Abdul Chaer (2004), which encompasses the elements of interference, integration, code-switching, and code-mixing. The indicators of language contact used in this research are presented as follows:

1. Interference

Interference refers to deviations in language use caused by the influence of another language already mastered by the speaker. When *Panglima Laot* speaks in Indonesian, both the structure and pronunciation are influenced by Acehnese or the speaker's mother tongue. For instance, interference can be observed in speech style, such as the use of Acehnese sentence patterns when speaking in Indonesian.



Based on an interview with the *Panglima Laot* of Langung Village, Meurebo District, West Aceh, it was noted that communication among fishers involves the use of various languages.

“On a daily basis, the *Panglima Laot* communicates with fishers using Acehnese and the Jamu language, but occasionally uses Indonesian as well...” (Interview, July 24, 2025).

This finding is consistent with responses from government officials, who stated that fishers and *Panglima Laot* still predominantly use local languages in their communication, even in formal situations such as government-led socialization or outreach activities.

“The fishers and *Panglima Laot* mostly communicate in Acehnese; when they speak Indonesian, their Acehnese dialect is still very pronounced.” (Interview, July 23, 2025).

In another situation, when interviewed regarding the government’s role in communicating policies, the *Panglima Laot* of Langung stated:

“The government agency directly conveys information to the fishers.” (Interview, July 24, 2025).

The use of direct sentence structures without formal conjunctions reflects local language patterns absorbed into the national language. This interference illustrates the dominance of the local language as the mother tongue and the instrumental function of Indonesian as the language of policy. The speakers do not completely switch languages but rather carry their local linguistic features into formal speech. This phenomenon indicates that interference is not merely linguistic in nature but also reflects the dominance of the local language as a symbol of strong cultural identity amid the demands of formal communication.

2. Integration

Integration occurs when elements of a foreign or regional language are accepted and become a permanent part of the recipient language. It takes place when linguistic elements from another language are permanently incorporated into the receiving language. In this context, many traditional terms have become part of the Indonesian lexicon within the fisheries domain. Examples include the use of terms such as *rumpon*, *pukat*, and *kenduri laot* in fisheries policy contexts. These terms originate from the Acehnese language but have become part of the national fisheries vocabulary. Although they are used in the Aceh context, such terms are also understood by officials from the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (DKP) and extension officers from outside the region. This integration demonstrates cultural and linguistic assimilation, wherein local vocabulary has been adopted without being perceived as code-mixing. These words have been integrated into the local variety of Indonesian used in West Aceh and are widely understood and utilized by both fishers and local government officials. Such integration enriches the Indonesian vocabulary in the field of fisheries and customary traditions with local nuances, reflecting the assimilation of culture and language. Thus, integration serves as a form of localization of the national language within the fishing communities of West Aceh.

3. Code-Switching

Code-switching refers to the complete shift from one linguistic code to another, depending on the situation or the interlocutor. It is the full transition from one language to another, prompted by changes in situation, interlocutor, or topic of conversation (Chaer, 2003:68). Based on the interviews, it was found that the *Panglima Laot* uses Acehnese or the Jamu dialect when communicating with fishers but switches to Indonesian when interacting with officials from the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (DKP). Similarly, DKP officials use Indonesian in formal meetings but switch to Acehnese during field outreach activities to ensure that policy messages are more easily understood. This information was obtained from interviews with the *Panglima Laot* of Langung and Meurebo villages.

“We communicate with the fishers here using Acehnese or the Jamu dialect because many of them are bilingual in those languages, but when speaking with government officials, we usually use Indonesian.” (Interview, July 24, 2024).

This statement is supported by the results of interviews with officials from the Fisheries Department, who explained that extension workers and government staff sometimes need to use the local language to ensure better understanding among coastal communities.

“The government also adapts to the language commonly used by most fishers, namely Acehnese, when communicating, providing extension services, or conducting socialization activities related to policies in the field.” (Interview with Fisheries Department, July 23, 2024).

This code-switching occurs due to differences between formal and informal communication situations as well as variations in the social status of interlocutors. The function of code-switching in this context is both instrumental (to adjust to the communicative context) and symbolic (to express local identity while demonstrating bilingual competence). The *Panglima Laot* uses the Acehnese language as a symbol of local identity but switches to Indonesian to convey legitimacy and professionalism. Code-switching thus reflects a functional and adaptive bilingual ability, while also serving as a form of respect toward social norms and authority within inter-institutional interactions.

4. Code-Mixing

Code-mixing occurs when a speaker inserts elements of another language (words, phrases, or clauses) into the primary language being used, without shifting the communicative context. According to Chaer (2010:107), code-mixing refers to the use of two or more languages within a single utterance, in which the speaker incorporates elements of another language without changing the context. This phenomenon was observed in the communication between the *Panglima Laot* and fishers, where speakers mix Acehnese and Indonesian to clarify meaning.

For example, the *Panglima Laot* often conveys government policy terms in Indonesian and then re-explains them in Acehnese to ensure better understanding among fishers. Such instances of code-mixing do not indicate a lack of language proficiency; rather, they represent an effective and contextual communication strategy.

“On a daily basis, we use Acehnese and Jamu languages, but occasionally we use Indonesian when conveying information.” (Interview with *Panglima Laot* of Langung, July 24, 2025)

In practice, when explaining government policies, the *Panglima Laot* mixes Indonesian (for technical policy terms) with Acehnese (for explanations to fishers). This code-mixing serves both situational and social identity functions—Acehnese is used to foster social closeness and solidarity with fishers, while Indonesian conveys formality and the credibility of government policies. Such code-mixing facilitates understanding while maintaining positive social relations among the parties involved.

“Acehnese is the daily language used by the *Panglima Laot* when communicating with fishers; in addition, the Jamu dialect and Indonesian are also used in interactions.” (Interview with *Panglima Laot* of Meurebo, July 23, 2025)

From a sociolinguistic perspective, code-mixing reflects an effort to balance formality and social solidarity within a bilingual community. The use of code-mixing also demonstrates linguistic flexibility as a means of social integration between groups. This phenomenon occurs naturally and strategically, not due to linguistic deficiency, but as a means to enhance clarity. Code-mixing thus functions as a two-



way communication strategy, simultaneously maintaining social closeness (solidarity function) and ensuring terminological accuracy (referential function).

Conclusion

This study concludes that language contact plays a crucial role in the communication process between government representatives, *Panglima Laot*, and coastal communities in West Aceh. The interaction between speakers of Indonesian, Acehese, and the Jamu dialect has created a unique sociolinguistic dynamic that reflects not only linguistic adaptation but also the negotiation of cultural identity within policy communication. The findings demonstrate that *Panglima Laot* acts as both a linguistic intermediary and a cultural bridge, ensuring that messages from the government are understood and accepted by local fishers. Through various forms of language contact; interference, integration, code-switching, and code-mixing communication becomes more effective and inclusive. Interference occurs when local linguistic structures influence the use of Indonesian, reflecting the dominance of the mother tongue in formal settings. Integration is seen in the absorption of local terms such as *rumpon* and *kenduri laot* into official fisheries vocabulary, signifying the assimilation of local culture into national discourse. Code-switching functions as a pragmatic tool that allows speakers to shift between languages according to context and interlocutor, while code-mixing is employed to clarify meaning and foster social closeness. These linguistic strategies demonstrate the community's flexibility and ability to navigate multilingual interactions. Overall, language contact serves not merely as a communication phenomenon but also as a mechanism for strengthening trust, participation, and mutual understanding between the government and coastal communities. The involvement of *Panglima Laot* ensures that government policies are delivered in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner, thus enhancing their effectiveness. It is recommended that future policy dissemination efforts continue to utilize local leaders and native languages to improve communication and promote sustainable fisheries management. Furthermore, linguistic and cultural diversity should be recognized as vital assets in building inclusive and participatory governance in coastal regions. In practical terms, policy dissemination should adopt clear, context-appropriate language that reflects local communication norms, while avoiding technical jargon that may hinder public understanding. Messages should be tailored to the sociocultural characteristics, literacy levels, and everyday experiences of coastal populations to ensure that policy content is both relatable and actionable. Effective dissemination strategies should employ multiple communication channels, including village forums, customary gatherings, radio broadcasts, local storytelling formats, and community-based digital platforms to reach varied demographic groups. Governments and implementing agencies should conduct message testing to evaluate the clarity and relevance of policy information, engage local communities in co-designing communication materials, and ensure that translation processes maintain conceptual accuracy without losing cultural nuance. Additionally, establishing continuous feedback mechanisms, such as community consultations, complaint-response systems, and participatory monitoring, will help ensure that policy messages are not only delivered but genuinely understood, trusted, and internalized by coastal stakeholders. By integrating these linguistic and culturally responsive approaches, policy dissemination can become more equitable, effective, and aligned with the lived realities of coastal communities.

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