

Bitter or Sweet? The Vital Role of Sociolinguistic Survey in Lampungic Dialectology

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Abstract

Many previous studies have described various linguistic aspects of individual speech varieties within the Lampungic language cluster of southern Sumatra, listed as a group of nine separate languages in the 15th edition of the *Ethnologue* (Gordon 2005). This paper seeks to clarify the number of languages and the internal grouping of the various flavors of speech within the cluster in light of previous research such as Walker (1975) and Mitani (1980). The sociolinguistic survey methods used during three language survey trips among the Lampungic peoples are described and compared, including the use of interviews, sociolinguistic questionnaires and a Rapid Appraisal Recorded Text Test (Stalder 1996 and O'Leary 1994). The conclusions of this sociolinguistic analysis are then briefly compared with the results of other linguistic survey techniques used to study the Lampungic cluster. The author examines the divergent conclusions that can be drawn from one survey method over against another and argues that drawing broader conclusions from the whole corpus of available information is preferable and possible. Finally, the implications of this sociolinguistic 'taste test' to enumerating and mapping out the languages of these descendants of *Si Pahit Lidah* 'Bitter Tongue' are presented.

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