

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION OF ACEHNESE WITH
A FOCUS ON WEST ACEHNESE: A STIGMATISED DIALECT**

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وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ
 وَالْوَسَائِدِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth
 and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in
 that are signs for those of knowledge. Q.S. Ar-Rum (The Romans) 30, ayah 22

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates differences between two Acehese dialects, the high status North Acehese and the stigmatised West Acehese, and explores the social interpretations of these differences. The linguistic subsystems that differentiate the two dialects are analysed and attitudes of Northern and Western Acehese speakers towards the dialects are investigated. To obtain primary data from native speakers, intensive fieldwork in The Province of Aceh was carried out. An Acehese wordlist from Daud & Durie's (1999) *Kamus basa Acèh = Kamus bahasa Aceh = Acehese-Indonesian-English thesaurus*, -which is mainly based on North Acehese, was used to elicit a comparative wordlist in West Acehese. Three different methods were used in the data collection: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the matched guise test. The data from the questionnaire of the matched guise test was analysed statistically in order to determine the significance of the results.

There are salient differences between North and West Aceh dialects regarding several key phonological features and lexical items. It is also found that Acehese has a more complex vowel system in comparison to Bahasa Indonesia. Although the Acehese vowel system includes all the vowels of Bahasa Indonesia, North and West Acehese exhibit different vowel correspondences in Indonesian loanwords and in some cases replace Indonesian vowels with the vowel /u/, which is unusual amongst the world's languages.

Some differences characterise North Acehese as a 'refined,' 'standard,' and 'prestigious' Acehese variety and West Acehese as a 'rough,' 'vulgar', and stigmatised variety. However, these characterisations need careful discussion in this context. Due to the negative opinion towards their dialect, West Acehese speakers accommodate their language style to North Acehese when they communicate with people of non-West Acehese background. However, the strong negative judgement that the majority of Acehese people express towards West Acehese in interviews and observations is not clearly reflected in the results of the matched guise test. The disconnect between attitudes to language and attitudes to people, and the array of different attitudes to different aspects of the language, is most pronounced in this case and has been the subject of repeated testing and further investigation.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that within Aceh, dialect differentiation and linguistic stigmatisation are primarily based on lexical semantics, whilst

phonology plays a role, but morphology and syntax are unimportant. Some distinctive features of West Acehnese, that are perceived by the speakers of North Acehnese, are salient and others less salient, even to the point that people may not even notice the differences. Certain distinctions may suggest that the speakers of West Acehnese are confused, some may lead to mild amusement, whilst others signify West Acehnese speakers as having a speech impediment. Most importantly, however, it is shown that the stigmatisation of West Acehnese is based on a mere handful of different lexemes, which invite the negative attitudes of North Acehnese speakers that this dialect is rude and impolite, and its speakers are regarded as ‘crude’, ‘rough’, and unintellectual. The results show that North Acehnese is a more prestigious dialect than West Acehnese. I speculate that *power* is the reason for North Acehnese having a higher position than West Acehnese in the Acehnese linguistic stratification: in general, Acehnese speakers in North Aceh hold more social, political and economic power than Acehnese speakers in West Aceh.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Date: 8 December 2014

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