

Uncovering the history of Nasal one layer at a time

The history of the languages of Sumatra cannot be fully understood without a full appreciation of language contact. This is especially true in the case of Nasal (/nasal/) [glottocode: nasa1239], a language of southwest Sumatra. Spoken by just over 3,000 people in three villages in Bengkulu province, Nasal represents the smallest speaker population on Sumatra, and it was not recognized by linguists as a language in its own right until 2007 (Anderbeck & Aprilani 2013). While initial investigations reveal that Nasal has been heavily influenced by both Malay and Lampungic, little is still known about the extent of this contact, especially at the levels of morphology and syntax. In this presentation, I aim to fill this gap in our knowledge by uncovering the layers of contact with Malay and Lampungic. Furthermore, I link these changes to current patterns of language use where the Nasal speech community represents a fringe case of small-scale multilingualism (Pakendorf, Dobrushina & Khanina 2021). This study has several implications for our understanding of the history of Sumatra and how Nasal provides us a unique window into the distant past.

References

- Anderbeck, Karl R. & Herdian Aprilani. 2013. *The Improbable Language: Survey Report on the Nasal Language of Bengkulu, Sumatra*. SIL International.
- Pakendorf, Brigitte, Nina Dobrushina & Olesya Khanina. 2021. A typology of small-scale multilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 25(4). 835–859.
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