

**Phonological Variation and Sociolinguistic Dynamics in Palu'e, Nusa Tenggara Timur:
A Study of Consonant Contrasts Across Inland and Coastal Dialects**

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Abstract

This study examines the phonological variations and sociolinguistic factors influencing dialectal differences in Palu'e, an Austronesian language spoken in the Sikka Regency of Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. Focusing on consonant contrasts, particularly bilabial (/p/ and /b/), alveolar (/d/ and /t/), velar (/g/ and /k/), and the distinction between palatal /tʃ/ and alveolar /s/ sounds in dialect A (including Hona, Woja, Keli, Matamere, Edo, Ngalu, Mudhe, and Woto) and dialect B (Cua, Nitu, Awa, Ko'a, Cawalo, Bako, Teo, Uwa, Maluriwu, and Ndeo). The research employs qualitative methods grounded in linguistic ethnography. Data collection involved in-depth interviews and speech recordings from key informants representing different dialectal groups. The findings reveal significant phonological differences between inland and coastal dialects, with inland variants generally preserving more traditional consonant realizations. Coastal dialects demonstrate greater linguistic flexibility, influenced by external factors such as trade and administrative interactions. The study highlights how geographical isolation, historical affiliations, and recent infrastructure developments have shaped these variations. Additionally, it explores the impact of social mobility and modernization on dialect convergence, particularly in administrative centers like Uwa. This research contributes to our understanding of how minority languages evolve in response to changing social dynamics. It underscores the complex interplay between language, geography, and culture in shaping dialectal variations.

Keywords : Palu'e language, Dialectal variation, Consonant contrast, Sociolinguistics factors