A Brief Look on Balinese Language Maintenance and Shift in Denpasar

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Abstract

Balinese language were spoken by Balinese that generally are multilingual speakers, since they would also need to be proficient in Indonesian and sometimes even have a good command of English; particularly those living in tourism area. Between Indonesian and English, the position of Balinese language in regard to the language maintenance and language shift can become a quite complex matter depending on the context and matter in conversation. This study tried to provide brief example of findings that indicated several factors that can insinuate the shift in language and the effort towards maintaining Balinese language.

Keywords: *multilingual, language maintenance, language shift, context*

I   INTRODUCTION

Despite the majority of Balinese community are Balinese language speakers, several aspects such as cultural change, religious change, media influence, labor migration and especially tourism can provide substantial incentives for language shift. The study examines language behavior of Balinese speakers in three different settings, selected strategically to measure the significance of context for language use. These three settings of language use are language use in (i) religious ceremony/practice, (ii) government offices (both main and branch offices), and (i) a royal family palace. Language use was recorded in spoken and written form (questionnaires filled out by the speakers) to support the findings.

Language maintenance cannot be separated with the study of language shift, since this shift is one of the factors that can threaten language maintenance. From the point of view of effort conducted to support language maintenance, Merti (2010) points out that language use in family, traditional markets, religious activities, cultural practices, art performances, and government policies can be seen as evidence to Balinese language maintenance. Furthermore, several factors that strengthen Balinese maintenance are Bali Post, Bali Aga, Orti Bali, and other examples of media in Bali. These examples have not adequately represented Balinese language maintenance in several other efforts, such as Balinese script signs (see Sena, 2017), social status in Balinese community, and even political or economic factor that can affect the government policies immensely. Therefore, this study focuses on the process of language maintenance and shift that can be seen through the speaker language use, along with the emphasize on context of language use that seemingly provide substantial contribution to the findings. This study attempts to elucidate categories that signify successful language maintenance and the process of language shift, as well as trying to explain the domains of context, which can be outlined in terms of Balinese community in Denpasar. Through observing Balinese language maintenance and shift in Denpasar, there are two aspects to be studied: (1) any speech level that underwent significant changes during Balinese language maintenance, and (2) the relationship of context and lexical shifts during Balinese language maintenance.

II   MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1   LITERATURE REVIEW

Kurniasih (2006) stated that the role of parents is very crucial to their children language preference in language shift and maintenance point of view. By taking account of several factors such as educational background, formal and non-formal domains, the social classes, and supported by findings on the language attitude, she points out the status of Indonesian language in Javanese community and the difference of language use in terms of both languages. In reference to Kurniasih (2006), Musgrave (2014) pointed out that regional languages in western part of the nation have better prospects for language maintenance than the many small languages in the east. Based on the language use in Java and Central Maluku, the comparison is clear, where Javanese language in the western part of the nation has distinctive advantageof the possibilities in educational system and the concern of large number of speakers. His findings also echoed by Kurniasih (2006), suggesting that the majority of children are

taught by their mother using Indonesian language at home. These findings imply that there is a tendency of gender preference for language use, where women subconsciously prefer using Indonesian language to maintain equality to the men as well as countermeasure to social class impact.

Budiawan (2000) in his research of Balinese Diaspora in Lampung, suggest that when in the same multicultural context with Javanese language; because of transmigrate area, Balinese language is still well preserved in social activities. The contact between languages does not influence language shift but enrich their knowledge as multilingual speakers instead. These languages will then serve as salient marker to the social group in Lampung. Similar research also conducted by Malini (2011) in Lampung, which taken on elaborated approach that stated language interference occur between Balinese, Indonesian, and Javanese language. This interference occurs in phonological level that marked by changes of low vowels into middle vowels, and morphological level that marked with attachment of suffixes. Furthermore, amongst 6 of her findings on several factors that support Balinese language maintenance in Lampung, she also stated that transmigrated people have strong loyalty and great pride in Balinese cultures as well as the language. In align to Kurniasih (2006), Malini (2011) also stated that mastery of Balinese speech level is very low on younger generation or children. Language development in Lampung has generated a more neutral common register that mainly occur in vocabularies of greeting forms, activities, as well as quality and condition.

Another similar research by Djamereng (2014) also points out that Balinese speaker in Sukamaju, North Luwu, Sulawesi has also used the language as a mean of expressing cultural and self-identity in this transmigration area. It is interesting to figure out that language attitude of Balinese speakers in transmigration area often showed a positive attitude due to their feeling of proud on their homeland as a global tourism destination. Several major factors to Balinese language maintenance that Djamereng (2014) has stated are age, education, settlement pattern, mobility, bilingualism, religion, and culture. He also points out that positive language attitude does not guarantee language maintenance, since several interviewees state their reluctant in using Balinese language due to the feeling of afraid making mistakes.

In Bali, Putrayasa (2016) stated that Balinese language speaker does not able to meet their desired outcome from the language, where the mastery cannot provide added value to improve the standard of living. In his research, there are three strategies of Balinese language maintenance, such as encouraging Balinese language use in everyday family life, using it in social interaction of both customary and religious realm, and through education and teaching at school. The first strategy of encouraging Balinese language use in family context is not a viable option, since referring to Kurniasih (2006), the majority of parents in Indonesia will prefer using Indonesian language to their children due to the globalization and majority of social group demand. Another similar research in Bali by Maharani (2013) showed that through using story telling such as *I Lutung jak I Kakua*, *Pan Balang Tamak*, and *Siap Selem* on a total of 12 Banjar in Batubulan Village, Balinese speakers will inevitably convey Balinese language to their children in family context. This story telling is thought to hold significant part in consolidating morality and character reinforcement to the children. Her similar research in Ubud (2016) took more significant approach on Language maintenance by using contextual mapping of Balinese community. The first area is indicated to be able to maintain Balinese language due to their population of mostly *pengayah* (people who are alert and ready to give their devotion in various religious activities in Puri or the Royal Palace of Ubud), which imply the necessity to use higher speech levels of Balinese language. The second area also able to maintain Balinese language due to the nature of tourism places that generates strong ethnic awareness, which in turn, presented in the use of their mother tongue language. To her findings, it also pointed out that both areas also experiencing language shift to Indonesian and other foreign language (in the tourism area). Nevertheless, Balinese language maintenance is relatively strong due to the existence of Royal Palace and the social or religious activities (*ngayah*) involved around it. This research will aim at discovering the domain where this shift occurred, which is not mentioned specifically in her research.

Language maintenance can be supported by the speaker awareness to place the language as an important symbol of group identity (Holmes, 1992: 71). This concept justifies social phenomenon nowadays, where most Balinese language speakers realized how Bali has become a world tourism destination, which attract multilingual and multicultural people that interested in Balinese culture. Therefore, these speakers that directly (as in their occupation) or indirectly depend on the tourism aspect, will always greatly value their culture, and thus the language as a product of culture. In a community with caste based social distribution, language change will occur from the highest caste down to the bottom, which will eventually accepted by the whole community. From this example, it suggests

that two most important factors that affect language maintenance are variability of language use and social pressure experienced by the speaker of this language (Wardhaugh, 1984: 202, 210). While variability of language use can be explained through linguistic features, such as semantic properties, the social pressure will need to be based on the subject social status and contextual effect considerably.

In the context consideration to conduct this research, frequency of language use may help the effort of maintaining language (Holmes, 1992: 72). Furthermore, by looking at the relationship of age with language competence, these cases suggest that relatively young speakers of certain language will use a different form and preferences compared to the old speakers (Wardhaugh, 1984: 191). Based on gender, in most cases, women often show higher general language comprehension and usage compared to the men (Wardhaugh, 1984: 195). In Balinese community setting, the complexity of politeness used by the women shows how they comprehend higher speech level.

2.2 METHOD

The subject in this project will be ten main interviewees (five men and five women) based on three different contexts, which are during two different religious ceremonies/practices, in two different government offices, and in the royal family palace. Aside from interview to these ten speakers, questionnaires will be filled out by other Balinese speakers during the same setting of occurrence. Study will be conducted specifically in Denpasar, where numerous multilingual communities gathered. The recording of main interviewees will be done during three occasions of these three contexts; during religious ceremony conducted (mainly conversation occur to the priest and other family members), during meeting in the government office (mainly conversation occur to the seniors and juniors), and during daily conversation among the royal family members.

Religious ceremonies such as *Dewa Yadnya* (related to Gods) and Manusa Yadnya (related to people celebration) are taken into account, since religious aspect has already mixed in Balinese culture, i.e., the offering of the same ceremony can be different based on the place conducted, social status of the participants involved, and even the current economy status of the person / family in charge of the ceremony. Additional reason of relating these two ceremonies contexts is since both ceremonies are highly regarded by Balinese communities; where most of the time, Balinese people will see this ceremony as a benchmark of a person / family wealth. In the government offices, both main office and branch will be setting where this research conducted, since political power also serves tremendous effect on the social standing; i.e., over the past few years, political power has shifted to people from Singaraja (same place where the Governor came from), which caused the phenomenon where a lot of participants on that community were able to gain higher social status and/or occupation that related to politics, such as public servant. The consideration of taking royal family into account is due to the nature of social status (caste) in Bali and how these families will considerably uphold any values that may reside in any language units.

Data source will be gained through a set of indigenous language unit based on the subject language competence combined with the subject point of view on current Balinese language standing in the community. Several data gained in the religious ceremonies will be separated based on the religious technical terms and common cultural terms. In the political setting, language choice will be considered as a variable, where there are four different levels of politeness according to who one addresses and where one is oneself located within the Hindu caste system. While in the royal family setting, data obtained will be focused on distinctive language unit that is taken account through its own social class standing.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following several short interviews to the subjects on all the contexts (settings) they were currently in, several interesting variables can be taken account. Out of the 10 speakers, 7 admitted that they tend to use Indonesian rather than Balinese upon stumbling on vocabularies that they were not familiar with or were not able to find its respective meaning in Balinese. The rest (3 speakers) would try to ask the person they were talking with (helping them memorize the vocabulary) and trying to describe it through object representation or associative meaning.

On the matter of language shift, aside from the stand of Indonesian as an option to the Balinese speakers, all speakers (10) were and will, upon asked, change their speech level from low to high, or vice versa. Balinese language has four different speech levels, ranging from the highest one (*Alus Singgih*) that usually used to priests or royalty families down to the lowest one (*Kepara*) that usually used in daily conversation and towards very close friends or families. While some changes can occur,

Indonesian still can serve as a way out to speakers' limited access on vocabularies, since Indonesian is considered as very formal as well. In different context of religion, Putra (2009) research on Balinese language spoken by Moslem speech community showed interesting finding as to how Moslem speech community in Pegayaman village will integrate their naming system to show their ethnic identity (as Moslem) and at the same time enhance their existence as a part of Balinese society. This code-mixing phenomenon expands from their naming system, up to terms of address, particle usage, and the use of other vocabularies. This kind of shift can suggest that while language shift can occur between different languages, it can also occur inside the language by the different speakers themselves.

Multilingual effect in a specific community does not guarantee occurrence of language change and language maintenance, though it will cause several cases of language shifts, due to different language use by the majority and minority group of respective community (Chaer, 2004: 148). Such as the way of people from different hierarchy class in Bali that has to shift to Indonesian language to reduce the possibility of making mistake in using the correct speech level. Therefore, it is unclear as to what aspects that can support or justify the effort of language maintenance. The concept of maintenance in language maintenance does not refer to a stagnant term; it has the possibility of including language change in smaller scope, due to the internal development and/or any contact to other languages. Nevertheless, several language subsystems such as phonology, morphology, syntactic, semantic, and core lexicon should still intact (Winford, 2003: 11). In the case of Balinese language, several semantic properties may also shift due to the variety of dialects.

In the respective gender, 4 out of the 5 women can speak and maintain fluent high speech level of Balinese, while only 2 out of the 5 men can perform similarly. One of the reasons this occur might be because Balinese values men as the head of the family, which tend to receive more command of respect in family setting. For example, marriage by couples of different castes were only possible when done by higher caste of the groom's family, while if it was done in the opposite, the bride (who are of a higher caste than the groom) will be frowned upon for choosing someone from a lower caste. In correlation to gender, the three settings also produced findings, where 8 out of the 10 speakers will tend to use higher speech levels to the priest or any other key person involved in the ceremony, to their seniors or supervisor in the context of meeting, and to the head of the family in royal family context. The other 2 out of the 10 speakers will keep on using Indonesian, even though they were quite fluent in Balinese, to enable a safer option in their communication. Aside from the use of Balinese in a formal government meeting (which usually done in Indonesian), one interesting finding to note in this respect was how some royal family members (the women) who tend to use relatively higher speech level when speaking with someone older (parents, parent-in-law, or other older family members who are not so distant), would not use so much higher speech level when talking to their husband (which in fact, usually is the head of the family). This can indicate that 'distant' of relationship from the speakers can triumph the aspect of general context (i.e., royal family status). Moreover, 6 out of the 10 Balinese speakers would agree that if they were to fail in producing Balinese language on a particular speech level during a certain context, it would generally deteriorate their conversation and sometimes worsen their relationship with the other speaker (interestingly, the use a sudden higher speech level to a very close friend can create distances and misunderstanding as well). This can suggest that relationship of 'power' and 'status' in the respective context can add or diminish appropriate speech level that correspond to their needs. While the use of Balinese rather than Indonesian even in formal non-religious, non-cultural settings (i.e., formal government meetings) can be a clear example of the effort in language maintenance, the language shift that occurred in the other settings (contexts) can also be a sign that controls have to be put in place so that these factors (e.g., age, caste, position, or gender) would not greatly affect the occurrence of language shifts.

IV   CONCLUSION

In summary, upon the findings seen through considering gender, context, and social status or hierarchy, there are two conclusions to be drawn: (1) vocabularies and phrases will be replaced abruptly due to the pursuit of common understanding during conversation; (2) if the language needed in particular context; Balinese speakers are obliged to adjust their speech level. The following findings can prove beneficial to future studies to consider these aspects in discussing language maintenance and shift; particularly, that of Balinese language.

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