

Language Maintenance of Balinese Diaspora in Lampung, Indonesia¹

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Abstract

Language is a social identity. People can recognize who we are from the language we use. A language is supposed to be bonded to its society, wherever they are and no matter how far away they are from their homeland. A language can be perceived as being maintained when it is still used by its speakers. Such a situation can be seen in the Balinese Diaspora who lives in Lampung province, Indonesia. This paper aims to portray how Balinese Diaspora in Lampung maintains their language. The research method applied is descriptive qualitative. The data collections were done through ethnographic observations and interview.

To sum up, Balinese language is being maintained among Balinese Diaspora in Lampung province, specifically in three regencies, which cover eight villages. It was found that Balinese language serves as a means of daily communication both in home domain and neighborhood setting. It was found that Balinese people who are able to speak their mother tongue are <3 - >50 years of age. It, therefore, explicates that this language remains consistent being inherited as mother tongue from generation to generation. In addition, it serves as a medium of social activities, such as social deliberation, religious practices, ceremonies and many other social activities. Interestingly, although there is a contact language between Balinese and Javanese language, they are not influenced to shift their language to Javanese language. So are Javanese people. It makes them bilingual even multilingual. They alternately used both languages when Bahasa Indonesia is not used as a lingua franca. At last, for these people, among all cultural characteristics, language is the most salient marker because each social group feels as unity, which differ them from other groups.

Key Words: Diaspora, language, cultural identity, Balinese

I. Introduction

When we hear someone speak, we immediately make guesses about gender, education level, age, profession, and place of origin. Beyond this individual matter, a language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity (Spolsky, 1999; 181). Moreover, language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. As a means of communicating cultural values, beliefs and customs, it has an important social function and fosters feelings of group identity and

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solidarity. It is as a means by which culture and its traditions and shared values may be conveyed and preserved. Hence, Language is fundamental to cultural identity.

Cultural identity is an important contributor to people's well-being. Identification by a particular culture helps people feel they belong and gives them a sense of security. It provides access to social networks, which provide support and shared values and aspirations. Social networks can help to break down barriers and build a sense of trust between people.

Language develops according to the particular needs of the people who live in a certain location at a certain period of time, who share a way of life and culture. Therefore, it is clear that language is strongly intertwined with culture and identity. A certain richness of communication and connection is lost when a person is unable to speak the language of his or her ancestors. On the other hand, knowing the language of one's ancestors provides a sense of grounding and belonging.

As languages disappear, cultures die. This is so for people everywhere. For this reason, it is important that people keep their own language alive, though, for some reasons, they have been separated from their homeland- the Diaspora. Balinese is an extremely good example of an ethnic that can maintain language as their cultural identity. Therefore, this paper portrays language maintenance as cultural identity of Balinese Diaspora in Lampung.

II. Subject and Data Collection

The subject of this research is Balinese people who live in Lampung province³. Data collection was done through an ethnographic observation and interview. It aims to see the domain of Balinese language (henceforth BL) use. In this regard, observations were made in the homes of Balinese Diaspora in three regencies, which cover eight villages: 1) Central Lampung regency which covers Seputih Mataram, Seputih Raman, and Seputih Banyak, and Padang Ratu village; 2) Way Kanan regency which covers Central Bali Sadhar, Southern Bali Sadhar, and Northern Bali Sadhar Village; 3) East Lampung regency which covers Jembrana Village. The observation sheet was designed in such a way that the observers (field assistants)⁴ would be able to fill it in easily, quickly and unobtrusively. They only had to put a circle around the corresponding letter (a, b, c, d) of the item observed or noted. The items included what language (BL, Bahasa Indonesia henceforth BI, or others) is used in the home speech event, the estimated age group of the interlocutors, the language used when speaking

³ Lampung is a province of Indonesia. It is located on the Southern tip of the island of Sumatera and borders the provinces of Bengkulu and South Sumatera. It was one of the earliest and most significant transmigration destinations. Three quarters of its current population is descendent from migrants from Java, Bali, and Madura.

⁴ Field assistants were writer's students who live in those areas

to other tribes, etc. To further mitigate the effect of a possible observer's paradox, they were instructed to be as unobtrusive as possible and to choose a home speech event in which the interlocutors were unaware, or at least minimally aware.

III. Discussion

Before discussing how Balinese language is maintained by its speakers, this discussion is begun with a concise concept of language maintenance and of Diaspora to make discussion clear. Diaspora is defined as the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions (Ashcroft, Griffith, Tiffin, 2000: 17). A Diaspora exists when those people, living far from home, forge some sort of community with each other and maintains a relationship (real or otherwise) with their homeland. In this extend, Balinese Diasporas are duly explained as people originated from Bali island living in Lampung province.

The term language maintenance is coined by Joshua Fishman (1966) for the preservation of a language or language variety in a context where there is considerable pressure for speakers to shift toward the more prestigious or politically dominant language (Swann *et al* 2004:172). In other words, such term describes a situation in which a speaker, a group of speakers, or a speech community continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life despite competition with the dominant or majority language to become the main/sole language in these spheres (Pauwels 2005). These two opinions delineate that if speakers of a language collectively decide to keep using their language, such language is being maintained, which is then called language maintenance. The following is the elaboration how Balinese Diaspora in Lampung province maintain their language.

Balinese people came to Lampung as (trans) migrants⁵. They spread in many regions of Lampung, mostly in Central Lampung, East Lampung, South Lampung, North Lampung, Way Kanan and Western Coast Lampung⁶. One of Balinese Diaspora's way of life is living in communal as a way of keeping and preserving their cultures and tradition.

⁵ The (trans) migration (Indonesian:*transmigrasi*) was an initiative of the Dutch Colonial government, and later continued by Indonesian government, under the reign of President Soekarno, to move landless people from densely populated areas of Indonesia (Java, Bali and Madura) to less populous areas of the country. The stated purpose of this program was to reduce the considerable poverty and over population on Java, to provide opportunities for hard-working poor people and to provide a workforce to better utilize the natural resources of the outer island. Balinese firstly migrated to Lampung in 1952 and settled in Seputih Raman, Central Lampung.

⁶ This research only focuses on three areas, Central Lampung, East Lampung and Way Kanan, due to time limitation. However, writer believes that it can represent the whole situation of Balinese language because they (live in transmigration area) have the same way of life, living in communal way.

The result of the observation showed that BL is still maintained by its speakers. From those eight villages, it was found that BL serves as a means of daily communication both in home domain and environmental setting. It remains consistent from time to time in such group of communities. Clyne & Kipp (1999:47) note that “the home has often been cited as a key element in language maintenance – if a language is not maintained in the home domain, then it cannot be maintained elsewhere.”

In home domain, parents always used BL when speaking to their children. It was begun since they were infants. The harmony of the use of BL in this domain seems to be consistent because it indirectly creates an atmosphere that children have to also use BL when speaking to their family members. This atmosphere was conditioned since their childhood. It was found that the average age of children who master BL is between 3-6 years old. In wider context, seen from the ages, Balinese people who are able to speak BL are <3 - >50 years of age. It, therefore, explicates that BL remains consistent being inherited as mother tongue from generation to generation in this community. This condition does match with Fishman (1991) statement “the key point is that for the language to be maintained, it needs to be passed on to, and acquired by, each successive generation. It is often parents who decide to teach their mother tongue to their children”. If (Gunarwan 1990) parents do not pass it down to their successive generation, it will be the main cause of language shift, event to the worse one, death or at least a ceremonial language only.

Besides home domain, BL is also used in environmental setting, such as neighbors and/or friends. In a wider context, BL serves a medium of social activities, such as social deliberation⁷, religious practices⁸, ceremonies⁹, and many other social activities. In addition, cultural teaching and values oblige them to live in one place communally and becomes a way of life. The last state creates an environment where all inhabitants are homogenous. Such way does enable them to keep contacting to their community and creates an emotional attachment to their homeland no matter how far away they are. It is, therefore, another way how they keep maintaining and preserving their culture and language. These activities and cultural teaching play important role in maintaining their language. In addition, the result of interview showed that they have positive attitude toward BL. They feel proud of using BL in any domain; market, school, colleges, bus and other settings. They feel that BL is unique and

⁷ It refers an activity in which they discuss a certain problem to decide something by involving the representative of each family in the village. It is part of democracy. In a wider context, it the fourth principle of the five basic principles of Indonesia “democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives”.

⁸ Most Balinese people practice Hinduism. See Balinese Hinduism

⁹ See Balinese wedding and *ngaben* ceremonies

nice. It can be assumed that people have positive attitude toward their own language because (Edward 1985 in Budiawan 2008:84-85) positive feeling toward such language is closely related to the maintenance of their group identity. Language (Fishman 1991) is tied not only to communication with family but to cultural identity as well.

Language becomes an ethnic index if its speakers feel that they have historical similarity and emotional attachment to such language. It will then raise social group identity. So, for these people, among all cultural characteristics, language is the most salient marker because each social group feels as unity which different from other groups. For them (Kridalaksana 2005:2) language is not only as a sign system but also as a sign of social identity.

Most Balinese people are bilinguals even multilingual. They are able to speak Bahasa Indonesia (BI) and Javanese Language (JL). BI serves as a lingua franca when they speak to people who have different languages. In addition, they are able to speak JL because their villages are surrounded by Javanese Diaspora. Consequently, it creates a contact language. However, it was found that many Javanese people are able to speak BL. Interestingly, Balinese people are not influenced to shift their language to JL. So are Javanese people. Both communities alternately used both languages when BI is not used as a lingua franca.

However, such situation can only be found in remote area, transmigration area. Cities become an exception. Balinese people who live in the city tend to live apart from their community and tend to shift their language to Bahasa Indonesia (BI) because the environment is heterogeneous. It shows how environment has a big influence to the maintenance or shift of a language. Ni Luh, for example, a student of the Higher School of Foreign Language Teknokrat Bandar Lampung, was born and grew up in Bandar Lampung city. She was not able to speak BL although she could understand it. However, it was different from her first and second siblings who were born and grew up in Balinese environment, Central Lampung regency¹⁰. Both could speak BL very well. Her third sibling was born and grew up in Bandar Lampung city and her fourth sibling was born in Central Lampung regency but grew up in Bandar Lampung city. Both her last siblings were not able to speak BL. This situation clearly shows how an environment has a big influence to the maintenance or shift of a language.

However, Ni Luh's attitude toward BL was very positive. She loved BL very much. She felt ashamed being unable to speak BL. For her, "BL is an identity and it became a

¹⁰ Its distance to city of Central Lampung is approximately 20 kilometers. To Bandar Lampung city is about 75 kilometers

demand”, she said. For this reason, she promised to herself to learn to be able to speak BL. In this respect, attitude toward a language also plays an important role to the maintenance or shift of a language.

IV. Conclusion

To sum up, BL is being maintained among Balinese diaspora in Lampung province, specifically in three regions which cover eight villages, namely Central Bali Sadhar Village, Southern Bali Sadhar Village, and Northern Bali Sadhar Village, Banjit District, Waykan, Seputih Mataram, Central Lampung, Seputih Raman, and Seputih Banyak, Jembrana Village, East Lampung. From those eight villages, it was found that BL served as a means of daily communication both in home domain and neighborhood setting. It was found that Balinese people who are able to speak BL are <3 - >50 years of age. It, therefore, explicates that BL remains consistent being inherited as mother tongue from generation to generation in this community.

Another reason of maintaining BL is because it serves as a medium of social activities, such as social deliberation, religious practices, ceremonies, and many other social activities. In addition, cultural teaching and values oblige them to live in one place communally and becomes a way of life. It becomes another way how they keep maintaining and preserving their culture and language. So, for these people, among all cultural characteristics, language is the most salient marker because each social group feels as unity which differ them from other groups. For them language is not only as a sign system but also as a sign of social identity. Interestingly, although Balinese people are bilingual even multilingual, they are not influenced to shift their language to JL. So are Javanese people. Both alternately used both language when BI is not used as a lingua franca.

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