

## IMPLEMENTING LANGUAGE POLICY AT SCHOOL: THE CASE OF BALINESE LANGUAGE

**Desak Nyoman Dyah Rupita Dewi**

[dyah.rupita@yahoo.com](mailto:dyah.rupita@yahoo.com)

Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Bali Internasional

### Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating the implementation of language policy in maintaining and promoting Balinese at school. This research was a case study which took place at Taman Rama National Plus School, Badung. The subjects of the study were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. They were four students and a teacher. In this study, the data were collected by using two instruments, namely human instrument and interview guide. The findings show that Taman Rama National Plus School has a language policy that the school staff members and students should speak Balinese on Wednesdays. However, this policy could not be applied in doing communication and teaching because of two things, namely: the majority of non-Balinese speaking students and the poor mastery of Balinese on the part of the Balinese students. This study also highlights that the role of parents has greater influence than economic status of family in introducing and habituating children to use Balinese at home.

**Key Words:** *maintaining, language policy, economic status*

### 1. Introduction

Many countries have a language policy designed either to encourage or discourage the use of a particular language or set of

languages. Nations historically have used language policies most often to promote one national language. As an example in Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia (BI) was chosen as the national language when *Sumpah Pemuda* (youth oath) was declared on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1928. Soon after the declaration, BI becomes the official language in daily communication, education, and mass media in Indonesia.

On the other side, many countries, including Indonesia, have policies which are designed to maintain and to promote regional and ethnic languages whose viability is threatened. Fishman (1991) and Padilla (1999) as cited in Hatoss (2002) state that minority languages do not only serve as a means of communication for ethnic groups, but they are also important tools for expressing cultural heritage and ethnic identity. In Indonesia, UUD 1945 No.32 ayat 2 declares that Indonesia respects and maintains local languages as national culture. It means that national language (Indonesian) and local languages (e.g. Balinese, Sundanese, Javanese) are in the same position. Furthermore, UU No.32 Th.2004 announces that local governments and ethnic groups have policy to protect their culture. This policy shows that each local government in province or regency level in Indonesia has a responsibility to promote their identities such as language, marriage pattern, traditional house architecture, and traditional

clothes through mass media and education. In the end, their local identities will enrich the national culture.

In terms of local governments, Bali government has the autonomy to protect Balinese language as one way to maintain its culture. It is because language is tied together with culture and identity. It is argued by Gumperz (1985) that language is a powerful means of self identification. It is in a line with Duranti (1997) in Suastra (2007) who states that language is constantly used to differentiate culture of ethnic groups. Moreover, Kramsch (2000) and Crystal (2000) in Hakoss (2002) propose that language has its symbols to express, construct, and symbolize cultural identity.

However, nowadays, Balinese language is rarely used by Balinese people, especially the young generation. Moreover, it seems that Balinese language (BL) is a strange language for Balinese young generation. It is because of the dominant power of BI to be used in education and society. This makes the use of local and national language imbalance; therefore, language shift phenomenon happens. This phenomenon also happens in Java. Kurniasih (2006) in Musgrave (2008) found that the function of local language (Javanese) as a medium of daily communication is shifted by national language, Indonesian. Her research shows that middle class parents and children were much more likely to use Indonesian than their working class counterparts. An additional

finding is that mothers and female children were more likely to use Indonesian than their male counterparts. Surprisingly, only middle class children were observed to use only Indonesian with no Javanese at all. Kurniasih's data also suggest that this is to some extent a conscious choice being made by parents: in interacting with their social networks, no parents used Indonesian alone, but in communicating to their children, 88% of middle class mothers and 39% of middle class fathers used no Javanese.

This phenomenon could make the ethnic groups lose their identity, especially their ethnic languages. According to Grimes (2000) language loss happens because most of the speakers, especially children do not use their mother tongue in daily communication, and their parents do not use a good strategy in transmitting mother tongue to their children.

In case of BL, most of Balinese young generation do not speak Balinese. According to Suandi (2006) and Ardika (2006) in Suastra (2007) there are two factors influencing the phenomena, namely internal and external factors. Internally, BL does not provide scientific terms. It makes researchers thought that Balinese is a poor language. This is because there are no suitable terms in BL in order to refer to terms in multi discipline areas, such as technology, art, and science. Meanwhile, the external factor which is faced by Balinese language is the use of BI and foreign language, especially English, in education and mass media.

The exposure of Balinese people to languages other than BL makes Balinese people become multilingual, which encourages them to shift the language (Bloomfield, 1933; Haugen,1972; Chaer,1995 in Suastra, 2007).

The shifting of language from BL to BI or English shows a phenomenon of language loss. Language loss usually occurs in multilingual contexts in which a majority language comes to replace the range and functions of a minority language with the result that the speakers of the minority language shift over time to speaking the majority language (Schmidt, 2008). The function of Balinese as a means of communication for Balinese people is replaced by national and foreign language, English. As a national language, Bahasa Indonesia becomes the main language instruction used by teacher in each level of education in Bali. This influences learners to use Indonesian at school. Their habits in using Indonesian at school affect their daily communication at home and social environment.

The challenges which are faced by Balinese language, both internal and external, could threaten the existence of Balinese language and Balinese people would also lose their identity. Therefore, to maintain and protect Balinese identity, Bali government announces a policy named “Ajeg Bali”. The policy which is made by government is essential to change a trend from language shift to reverse language shift. To support this policy,

government drives it at schools. Tia Kusuma Wardani as Kepala Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Bali in 2007 states that one way to implement this policy is by applying “Sehari Berbahasa Bali” (A Day Speaking Balinese) at school. This influences the language policy which is applied in Taman Rama National Plus School. This school legitimates the use of Balinese in one day. It could be seen from an announcement on the notice board besides teachers’ office which reads *Ngiring Mabasa Bali Ring Rahina Buda* (Please, Use Balinese Every Wednesday).

Seeing the phenomenon of language shift in Bali, the researcher was interested in finding out the implementation of the policy at Taman Rama National Plus School.

The purposes of the study were firstly, to investigate the real implementation of the language policy at Taman Rama National Plus School; Secondly, to investigate whether or not the policy applied at Taman Rama National Plus School runs well, and finally, to investigate the influence of language policy applied at school toward the use of language of instruction.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

The previous chapter is intended to make the study clear in terms of background, problems under investigation, purposes of the study and the significance of the study. For the concern of the study, some related literatures are reviewed in this chapter. This

chapter will discuss some points which are relevant to the study. The points to be discussed are: Language shift and Language loss.

### 2.1 Language Shift

Language shift is a shift or displace of one minority language to language of a wider societies (Holmes, 1992 in Jiunkpe, 2003). It means that the process of language shift happens when a mother tongue of ethnic group is shifted or replaced by majority language. This phenomenon usually happens to young generation. They are usually interested to new things, including language. They shift their mother tongue because of several reasons. According to Suastra (2002), young generation shift their language from Balinese to Indonesian because Balinese could not fulfill their communication needs. It happens because there are terms in Indonesia which could not be found in Balinese.

The other reason why minority language groups shift their languages to majority language is a great influence of the dominant language. Balinese is greatly shifted because of the external pressures of the major languages, Indonesian and English. The world has become more globalized, market capitalism has become the dominant economic system, and schooling is now a right and obligation of all people. The globalization era gives both positive and negative effects toward Balinese, such as being able to communicate with people in Indonesian and English helps them to do a better business. Thus, there is increasing pressure on the

speakers of ethnic languages such as Balinese to learn national and foreign languages in order to gain access to the greater opportunity to build wide relationships with multicultural people in Indonesia and all over the world. This actually threatens the use of ethnic languages as official languages in daily communication. This process whereby a language is lost to another dominant language is defined as language shift (Almond, 2004).

Language shift occurs when two or more languages are in contact and one must become more salient to peoples' lives. Moreover, Richards et al (1992) in Almond (2004) defines language shift as a shift from the use of one language to the use of another language. This occurs because the policy made by official government-by restricting the number of languages used as media of instruction in teaching learning process- as well as the main language of the region is needed for employment and wider communication. Furthermore, Gal (1979) in Almond (2004) states that the process of language shifts is because of the result of social factors. Gal's study proved groundbreaking as it provided the first comprehensive picture of the process by which a minority language group stops using their native language and shifts into the majority language.

Theoretically, the process of language shift takes place in three main stages, starting when two linguistic communities are in contact and there is a power imbalance (Fishman, 1991 in Almond,

2004). The phenomenon is when an individual in community can experience language shift and stop using his or her language. Thus the Balinese shift only became salient when it was happening at all levels of society, and most importantly, when parents stopped passing the language on to their children, not when one or two individuals stopped speaking the language.

The first stage of language shift happens when speakers of a minority language experience increasing pressure to speak the majority language, especially in formal language domains such as school and government (Fishman, 1991; May, 2000).

The second stage of language shift is broadly described as being a period of bilingualism in which both languages are spoken. This may happen without language shift in the form of stable bilingualism (Fishman, 1965/2000), but in modern times is most often a stop on the road to dominance by the majority language (Fishman, 1991). For example, immigrants may speak their mother tongue for one, two or even three or more generations (Garcia, 1997), but what often happens is that a shift to the dominant language begins with the first generation born in the new country.

Finally, the third stage in language shift sees the minority language is replaced by the majority language as a wider mode of communication (May, 2000). This final stage may take place over the course of more than one generation but the result is always the

same-a general abandonment of the minority language in favor of the dominant language.

## 2.2 Language Loss

Hakoss (2002) states that there is a global tendency for local and minority languages to die out because of the majority language-national language- and the spread of a few world languages, namely English, Chinese, Spanish, or French language. Recent studies emphasize the significance of nation state, and political nationalism, for the issues of language loss and language rights. Given the opportunity (through access to education) and incentive (source of income, prestige), ethnic groups within a modern nation-state usually shift to the majority or state language, whereas regional nationalism is more likely to contribute to language maintenance. This happens in Bali, although there are laws which regulate the use of Balinese in communication, but the shift from Balinese to Indonesian still appears. Therefore, regional government announces a policy which should be adopted by schools in Bali, namely “*Sehari Berbahasa Bali*”. Language of education is hence central to the formation and maintenance of the modern nation-states. The language(s) legitimated in and through education play a key role in establishing and maintaining the cultural and linguistic shape of the nation-state.

Language loss usually occurs in multilingual contexts in which a majority language comes to replace the range and functions of a minority language with the result that the speakers of the minority language shift over time to speaking the majority language (Schmidt, 2008). The fact that in multilingual situations individuals constantly make choices on the use of language highlights the fact that language loss is not primarily a linguistic issue, but has to do with power, prejudice, (unequal) competition, and sometimes overt discrimination and subordination. This leads many minority-language speakers to seek their social, cultural, and economic advancement in the guise of a majority language (May, 2001 in Schmidt, 2008). Thus, ethnic or linguistic belonging considerably depends on political and social change. In Central and Eastern European states, language shifting and claiming multiple identities have been rather common. While the ratio between declared language and declared ethnicity can be an indicator for the influence of the political and social situation of a given time to these choices, differences between the two may show the importance of language as an identity marker.

Looking at the root causes of language loss it seems that it often has to do with unequal power distribution within nation-states, often leading to ethnic minorities either being assimilated into the majority language (main culture) by state pressure, or that they give up their minority language for socio-economic reasons.

Neither of these developments justifies the refusal of granting these minorities the promotion and protection of their culture and languages. On the contrary, they suggest that by promoting and fostering cultural diversity within a state preventing language loss, among minority groups, costly language revitalization program can be avoided. Language shift away from a minority language can have its root causes in various areas concerning the status or value of the minority language.

### **3. Research Method**

The focus of this research was to investigate the language policy implemented at Taman Rama National Plus School; whether or not the policy matched with the reality. Taman Rama National Plus School is located at Jalan Cokroaminoto No.382 Ubung, North of Denpasar. In accordance to its focus, the design of this research used a case study which only investigated the language policy adopted by a school. It could provide as much information as possible for the researcher. The researcher chose this school because of several considerations such as this school is a multilingual school and the students are mostly not from Bali. Further, the subjects of the study were four grade XII students and a teacher who teaches Bahasa Indonesia. The respondents were chosen on the basis of purposive sampling.

In this research, the data that would be collected were the

real implementation of the school language policy and the development of the school language policy. To gain the data, there were two types of instruments used, namely human instrument and interview guide. As human instrument, the researcher acted as an active participant in interviewing the subject of the study. Secondly, the interview guide was needed by the researcher in interviewing the subjects.

Further, the researcher used interview as the technique of her study. Interview was conducted to gain all the information needed, such as the language used at home and at school, the language used by teachers on Wednesday, the medium of instruction on Wednesday and others which could complete the data needed. Therefore, data obtained from interview were analyzed qualitatively.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

The language school policy implemented at Taman Rama National Plus School is “Speak Balinese on Wednesday”. This language policy was firstly implemented in 2007. This policy is adopted to maintain as well also to promote the local language, Balinese, to all students at the school of Taman Rama National Plus. It is because most of the students who study there are non-Balinese-speaking students. They are half-breed of Chinese and

Javanese, Chinese and Balinese, and Westerners, such as Italian. There are, however, few students who are Balinese.

In this school, there was a program that allows one of the teachers to give a speech after Morning Prayer. This program has relatively run well since the school opened. Therefore, the speech should be in Balinese on Wednesday and on other days, speech is delivered in English. However, by 2010, this policy was obliterated.

Based on the interview conducted toward the subjects of the study, it could be found that the real implementation of the school language policy at Taman Rama National Plus School was the Morning Prayer which is always conducted before the lesson is started. Furthermore, this policy is still conducted until today. Factually, one who reads the transcript of Morning Prayer is the student representative at Taman Rama National Plus School. Transcript of the prayer which is always read or announced on school days, except Wednesday is English. However, on Wednesday, the Morning Prayer is announced in Balinese language. This shows that there is an effort from the school's principle to maintain Balinese language and promote it to all students and teachers who do not speak Balinese.

Besides Morning Prayer, there is also a program established in this school which supports the policy of Balinese government to maintain and promote Balinese language, namely

Balinese News. News program has been long conducted, but it was only delivered using English. However, since the implementation of the language policy “A Day Speaking Balinese” in 2007, the news was delivered using Balinese language on Wednesdays after conducting Morning Prayer. The news was taken from newspaper and was prepared by Balinese course teacher. Further, the news presenter was one of the students at Taman Rama National Plus School. The news gave information about newsworthy event not only in Indonesia but also in other parts of the world. The subjects of the study honestly stated that they did not understand the news that was delivered by the presenter because the language used was *Bahasa Bali Halus*.

The notice stuck on the wall beside the teacher’s room which reads “*Ngiring Mabasa Bali ring Rahina Buda*” was used to remind the students, teachers, and administrative staff members to use BL on Wednesday. However, this notice was neglected especially by the students. On Wednesdays, all students still used national language, Indonesian, as a medium of communication at school because they did not understand BL. This also happened to Balinese students. When they talked to their Balinese friends, they seldom used Balinese language. It is because they did not really understand BL, especially *Basa Bali halus*. So, they preferred Indonesian to Balinese when talking to their friends and teachers. Further, they tended to shift their mother tongue, Balinese, to

Indonesian because most of their friends were not Balinese and did not understand BL although they had been living in Bali for years. Furthermore, based on the result of the interview conducted to Balinese students, they also did not speak Balinese well, so that they tended to use Indonesian in communication. It happened because their parents did not use Balinese at home. They tended to use Indonesian when talking to their children. By looking at the occupation of their parents, they belonged to middle upper family. It is in a line with Kurniasih (2006) in Musgrave (2008) who found that family's economic level influenced the choice of the language used by parents when talking to their children.

However, there were two subjects of study stated that they used Balinese when talking to friends at school not only on Wednesdays. One of the subjects was a pure Balinese, but the other one was not a pure Balinese. His father was from Ubud and his mother was an Australian. Surprisingly, he could speak Balinese fluently. It was because of his environment. His parents used Balinese when they talked to him at home and his friends as well as relatives also spoke Balinese. This influenced his ability in speaking Balinese, though he was not a pure Balinese. Furthermore, both of the subjects of the study were from middle upper family. Thus, it could be stated that family's economic status does not give much influence toward the use of majority language (Indonesian) at home as what stated by Kurniasih (2006) in

Musgrave (2008). The significant way to maintain Balinese is by using Balinese at home and close environment. Parents, friends, and relatives have important roles in introducing the local language, BL.

This phenomenon happened to the teachers who taught in Taman Rama National Plus School. Thirteen teachers who taught at this school were Balinese, one teacher was from Batak and others were from Ambon and Java. English was taught by a native speaker. When the teachers who were from Bali communicated to each other, they used Balinese in school hours. They used Balinese in order to make their relationship closer. However, when they talked to other teachers who were not from Bali, they shifted their language to Indonesian, although it was on Wednesday. It was because the other teachers who were not from Bali did not speak and understand Balinese.

Moreover, the language policy implemented in this school did not influence the medium of instruction used in teaching and learning process. Teachers still used Indonesian as the medium of instruction when teaching. It happened because Balinese language could not fulfill all terms in science, math, social, and other lessons. In other words, there are many terms which could not be translated into Balinese. Similar thing is also addressed by Suastra (2002), that Balinese language is poor. Moreover, there were several teachers who could not speak Balinese. In Balinese course,

the teacher uses Balinese and Indonesian as medium of instruction. However, the majority language used by teacher was BI. There was an understanding of the teacher toward the students who were not Balinese. That was the reason why the teachers did not use Balinese in teaching.

## **5. Conclusion and Suggestion**

The results of this study showed that the language policy at Taman Rama National Plus School which declares “A Day Speaking Balinese” did relatively run well. There are several reasons for this.

First, it is because most of students at Taman Rama National Plus School are not Balinese. This affects the language that is used in daily communication. They tend to use Indonesian, although there is a policy which asks them to use Balinese on Wednesday. Furthermore, this also influences the language that would be used by Balinese students when talking to them. Balinese students prefer to shift their language from BL to BI.

Second, there is a tendency for Balinese students and teachers to shift from Balinese to Indonesian when talking to others who are not Balinese. It is because they do not understand Balinese.

Third, environment has greater influence than economic status of family in choosing the local language to be used as a

means of communication. The role of environment, especially home is important in introducing and influencing children to use Balinese or local language in communication, especially for Balinese students.

Fourth, BL is poor of vocabulary. There are many terms in science, art, geography, and others subjects that cannot be translated into BL. This reason makes BL could not be used as a medium of instruction at Taman Rama National Plus School on Wednesday.

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that school principals and teachers keep the language policy which has already been implemented. Further, the programs that have been applied to support the policy should be maintained because these are a good try to maintain and promote the local language, Balinese. Further, one thing that should be considered is that the support or active participation from students' parents. It is because parents' participation plays a very important role in introducing and influencing students to speak Balinese.

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