

REVITALIZING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE TEACHING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE BALINESE LANGUAGE DAY

I Gusti Ngurah Agung Wijaya Mahardika
Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar,
wijayamahardika@uhnsugriwa.ac.id

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pelaksanaan program Hari Bahasa Bali di sebuah taman kanak-kanak di Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia. Program tersebut merupakan wujud upaya Pemprov dalam menjaga bahasa daerah. Dalam penerapannya menghadapi tiga permasalahan utama, yaitu kurangnya motivasi dan minat siswa, kurangnya dukungan orang tua, dan kurangnya penggunaan bahasa di masyarakat akibat kemajuan teknologi. Terlepas dari permasalahan ini, guru menganggap program ini bermanfaat dalam meningkatkan motivasi siswa dalam belajar bahasa serta dalam menggunakan bahasa dalam komunikasi mereka.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Bali, pemertahanan bahasa, perubahan bahasa, Hari Bahasa Bali

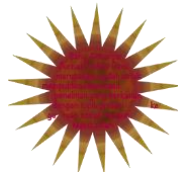
Abstract

The present study aims to describe the implementation of Balinese Language Day program at a kindergarten in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia. The program is a realization of the provincial government effort to maintain the local language. The implementation faced three main problems, namely the lack of students' motivation and interest, the lack of parental support and the lack of language use in the society due to technological advancement. Despite these problems, teachers considered the program to be beneficial in improving students' motivation in learning the language as well as in using the language in their communication.

Key words: Balinese language; language maintenance; language shift, Balinese Language Day

I. Introduction

The Indonesian government defines Indonesian national culture as the collection of the local culture pinnacles (Aprianti, et. Al., 2022). This definition implies that the national culture is based on the foundation of local cultures and the loss of local cultures will lead to the loss of the national culture. To prevent this from happening, the Indonesian government prompts and supports the



development and maintenance of local cultures throughout Indonesia including indigenous language.

Balinese language is one of the languages in Indonesia one of the more than 700 indigenous languages in Indonesia. The Balinese language is a unique language with a rigid rules and politeness levelling which makes it harder to master than other languages such as bahasa Indonesia (Suweta, 2019). A number of factors define what kind of words that one should use when conveying the same idea. For example, when a child wants to express the meaning of “I have eaten”, depending on the sociocultural position of the child and the person the child is speaking to, the resulting words choice used will vastly vary. Unfortunately, the rigid rules of the language my contribute to its decline. Since it has complicated rules regarding the diction or choice of words to use, user has to understand the rules and also know the correct diction or word for a certain meaning.

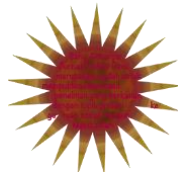
Several studies have highlighted the decrease in Balinese language use, especially among native Balinese (Arissusila, 2019; Ardiyasa, 2020; Giri, 2028; Mustika, 2018). Most Balinese youth communicate in Bahasa Indonesia and even foreign language such as English. When they do use the language, the use is marred with mistakes and errors. The most common mistake is the use of different level of language or choice of words. This phenomenon has prompted the local government to take serious steps to prevent the extinction of the Balinese language.

The Balinese regional government have been trying to maintain and develop the Balinese culture including the Balinese language especially the Balinese language by issuing Governor Regulation number 80 of 2018. The regulation generally outlines the rules off maintaining and developing Balinese language in Bali province including in the domain of education.

It is clearly stipulated in Chapter III Article 3 that the Balinese language is to be used as a means of communication in all aspects of life including familial, religious, cultural, and customary activities in Bali. In Article 4 it delineates that the Balinese language should also be used as a means of communication for teachers, students, and the public in general (Muliani and Muniksu, 2020).

In response to this regulation as well as based on the desire of the Balinese community to preserve their local tradition, schools in Bali star taking steps to ensure the use and teachings of Balinese language to the students, including in early childhood education institutions. The government views kindergarten, locally known as Taman Kanak-kanak (TK) and Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD), as the perfect venue to introduce the language to early learners.

Among the steps taken to promote and foster the use of Balinese language among early learners, the most popular one is Rahina Mabasa Bali or Balinese Language Day program. The present study aims to describe the implementation of Balinese Language Day in a kindergarten in Denpasar, Bali, the problems found in its implementation as well as the benefit of its implementation.



II. Review or Literature

Language maintenance it's an effort to keep a language to be used in a society Language. The effort is expected to be able to maintain the use and relevance of a language in a society. Despite the term which may imply that the language is maintained, i.e., used, only by people who speak the language it actually can also be by multilingual speakers. Any multilingual can choose the language they use as an act of language maintenance (Gumperz, 1982; Hudson, 1996; and Holmes, 2012).

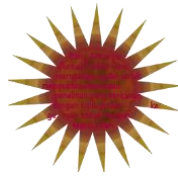
Language maintenance is the opposite of language shift. A language shift happens when a new language interfered with the existing language. The interference can be in the form of words borrowing, which later completely replace the words in the existing language. This process takes a long time over several generations of language speakers (Widianto, 2015). A new language can also be used more frequently and slowly pushed the existing language out of popular use. For example, in the Balinese society almost everybody in Bali speaks Bahasa Indonesia, hence, the Balinese language is slowly replaced by bahasa Indonesia. On top of the more frequent use of Bahasa Indonesia, it is also easier to use due to the lack of language levelling. Thus, the use of Bahasa Indonesia is considered to be more democratic, as opposed to the use of Balinese language which is seen as a part of the bygone era.

Beside interference for other languages, language can also happen due to the lack of positive language attitude. Garvin & Mathiot (1968) formulate the three categories of positive language attitude, namely: (1) Language loyalty, an attitude of a speaker of a language to use the language in communication; (2) Language Pride, the feeling of pride when a speaker speaks a certain language; (3) Awareness of the Norm refers to a speaker understanding and mastery of the rules of a certain language. The actions of going against these positive language attitudes are called negative language attitude. Some speakers of indigenous languages in Indonesia confirmed that they prefer to speak Bahasa Indonesia instead of their mother tongue because they feel that Bahasa Indonesia is more prestigious and modern (Widianto, 2015).

The existence of a language shift is usually followed by language maintenance. Previous studies have highlighted language maintenance actions in form of using indigenous language in arts, religious, and cultural activities (Mardikantoro, 2017; Widianto, 2018). In the Balinese context, the effort of maintaining the Balinese language seems to be a reaction to the shift in the usage of the Balinese language especially among the youths. The present study aims to provide a more complete picture of how this language maintenance is done when it is fully supported by the regional government.

III. Methodology

The present study is a qualitative study of the ethnographic design, conducted in Taman Kanak-Kanak Kumara Bhuwana II in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia. The kindergarten was selected because of its geographical location.



The kindergarten is located in the urban areas with students from various tribal backgrounds, although most of them are Balinese. The data were obtained using interview and observation techniques. The instruments use were interview guide and observation sheet. The observation was done in a span of 2 months. During the observation the researcher used the observation sheet to record the implementation of the Balinese Language Day, as well as the linguistics interaction between the students and teachers as well as students to students interaction.

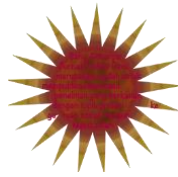
IV. Results and Discussion

The data collected from the kindergarten showed that the kindergarten was established in 2010. The school started accepting students the same year and started to provide Balinese language for the students. In Indonesian setting a child's formal learning started from the kindergarten. From a neurophysiological point of view, children from 2-12 years possess limited language ability (Indrawati and Oktaviana, 2005: 20). During this period, children are still getting acquainted with language, especially their mother tongue. Chaer defined this as a critical period in language acquisition (Chaer, 2003:8).

The teachers in PAUD Kumara Bhuwana II considers that kindergartens learners are in the right age to start developing their language and vocabulary repertoire. Thus, it would be very beneficial for the learners to be provided with stimuli to enable the learners to acquire a new language. In Paud Kumara Bhuwana II the Balinese Language Day is implemented on each Thursday, in accordance to the Governor Decree. During the implementation, students should also wear Balinese traditional costume. Unless when a particular Thursday is also a full moon day, considered to be an auspices day for the Balinese Hindus, then the students will wear special Balinese costume which are used to pray in the temples.

The language experience provided is divided into two main types. The active and the passive language experience. Active experience refers to students' production of the Balinese language, meanwhile passive refers to students' receptions of the language. During the day, the learners are expected to acquire the language through passive experiences such as 1) Listening and understanding utterance in Balinese language produced by the teachers and their fellow students; 2) understanding instruction in Balinese language; 3) acquiring vocabulary through conversation, and 4) enjoying and appreciating Balinese language through art and oral tradition such as Satua Bali (Balinese oral folktales).

Besides receiving linguistic stimuli, students also learn and acquire Balinese language through active production of the language through activities such as 1) repeating short sentences or instructions, 2) answering questions from the teachers or other speakers, 3) retelling their experience or a satua Bali to the



teachers or other speakers, and 4) generally expressing their meanings or feelings through words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in the Balinese language.

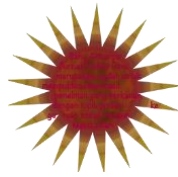
Teachers used several different approaches to provide stimuli in the Balinese language when conversing with the students. The first approach is the use of repeated sentences. The repeated sentences are a form of habit formation or drilling activity. Teachers used this approach when stating instruction and greetings. An example of this would be the greeting of *rahajeng semeng* (good morning) and the question of *sapunapi gatrane rahinane mangkin?* (How are you today?). Students also learn the variety of responses to the instruction and greeting. Students learn to say *titiang becik, Ibu* (I am fine, Ma'am).

The teachers reported that they cannot fully use the Balinese language during the Balinese Language Day. They still use Bahasa Indonesia here and there during the lesson and conversation. The teachers argued that their main goal is to provide stimuli instead of truly teaching the language. They feared that pushing students to communicate exclusively in Balinese language may push them away from the language. Overburdening the students with the language, may even demotivate the students. The same also apply with correcting students' mistakes during language production. When students realize that they are always corrected for every single mistake, they may feel ashamed and withdraw themselves from using the language, thus making the correction a counterproductive effort.

The second approach is the use of art such as Balinese folktales or *Satua Bali* and Balinese traditional dancing lesson. The story used such as *Siap Selem* (The Black Hen), *I Bawang lan Kesuna* (The Bawang and Kesuna), *I Ketimun Mas* (The Ketimun Mas), and *I Belog* (The Stupid One). Teachers tell the story bit by bit, instead of telling the whole story at one sitting. Here students learn to listen to Balinese utterances. Students are also given activities related to the story they just heard such as coloring, answering short questions using Balinese language.

Teachers in TK Kumara Bhuwana II argued that the use of *Satua Bali* is very beneficial for the students because of several reasons. 1) students are attracted to the storyline. The students enjoy the beautiful story and the proximity of the story and their daily life. 2) students do not feel bored when listening to the story because the way it is told, in chapters. This also made students giddily wait for the next part of the story in the following week. 3) The stories of *Satua Bali* are full of divine and noble moral values as well as local wisdoms. The noble values and local wisdom help to build students' pride and sense of belonging to their culture.

Satua Bali itself is a very effective medium for exposing the Balinese language to Balinese children at an early age. Children need to be introduced to their local language from an early age, so that children understand that their local language plays a role in their life. Studies have indicated that the age at which a



child is exposed to a language has an influence on the child's mastery of the language in question (Kouvelman et. Al., 2008). Therefore, introducing Balinese language to children through satua Bali will help students to master the language (Mahardika, 2013).

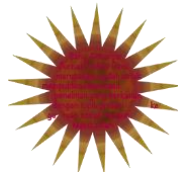
Interestingly, students were not only exposed to the Balinese language through oral activities alone but also through other artistic activities such as singing Balinese folksong and Balinese traditional dances. The songs taught to the students are Balinese local folksongs which were aimed to be sung by little children and known locally as Sekar Rare (Children Songs). The teachers taught the students the songs such as Meong-meong (The Cat), Made Cenic, Juru Pencar (The Fisherman), and Ratu Anom (The Young Prince) (Seriadi, 2017). The songs serve double purposes, first to entertain the children and the second to teach and expose the students to the Balinese language. Teachers reported that students really enjoyed the singing lessons. The songs were also effective as a tool of peer teaching. Students who already mastered the songs were instructed to teach those who had not. This lessens the students' anxiety since they learn from their peers instead from their teachers.

4. 1 Problems found in the Implementation of Balinese Language Day

Every implementation of any kinds of program will surely have and experience problems. The implementation of Balinese language Day also faced several problems as delineated herein. The problems detailed here are problems which are faced by both teachers and students who took part in the implementation of Balinese Language Day.

The first problem is the lack of students' interest and effort. Students have been observed to have low motivation in communicating with Balinese language. Especially students in urban location such as the location of TK Kumara Bhuwana II, since the students usually speak Bahasa Indonesia with their parents at home. Some students, despite being Balinese by blood, do not speak a word of the Balinese language. Therefore, the first few days of the implementation were always the difficult ones. In order to deal with this, teachers were forced to be creative. Since young learners are still in the realm of playing, they mostly prefer to play and have very short span of attention. The lack of motivation also made the students with low motivation to clam up. As in not saying anything or not taking an active role in producing the language. Therefore, teachers have to resort to the use of technique such as using fun activities like storytelling and singing which can grab and maintain students' attention.

The second problem found by the teachers were the lack of parents' support and involvement. As explained above, many parents do not use Balinese language at home, some even use Bahasa Indonesia exclusively. Therefore, students experienced a disjointed language practice. They use the Balinese language at



school for one day in a week, and then back home, they revert back to Bahasa Indonesia or other languages.

Another form of parents' lack of support is that the parents use low level Balinese at home. Meanwhile at school students are taught to speak high level Balinese. The low-level Balinese are the type of language considered to be rude and should only be used when conversing with people of the same social status or belonging to the same social circle such as childhood friends and fellow students. When talking to an older person or person with higher social status, high level Balinese should be used by the younger one.

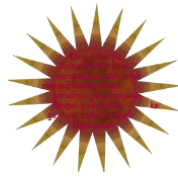
The last problem found by teachers was the lack of Balinese language use in public and everyday life in the society. Due to the advancement of technology, students are accustomed to interact with technology. For some of them, technology is everything. Some students are glued to their smartphones every day. Some parents also deliberately give their children smartphones or tablets so the parents can get some work done. Technology in the form of smartphone, internet, and YouTube are becoming the new nannies. When children interact with technology and through technology the use languages like Bahasa Indonesia and English. Some young children are able to use Korean, Japanese, English and other foreign languages words. All because of their exposure with and through technology. Even when students do not have access to smartphones and internet, the simplest form of modern entertainment, the radio and television broadcast, are mostly in Bahasa Indonesia and even English. There is very little place for Balinese language in these media.

4.2 The Benefit of Balinese Language Day

Despite the problems faced by teachers in implementing Balinese Language Day, teachers reported that they consider the implementation as beneficial. They stated that students exhibit marked improvements in terms of their Balinese language use. Although students may not master the language or even have enough vocabulary to construct a paragraph, yet students have gone through changes that can be beneficial for their future.

Teachers argued that students showed improvement in the numbers of vocabulary mastered and more importantly students show improvement in terms of the motivation to learn and use the language. This can be seen from the increase of their curiosity with the language., students often asked the teachers for the Balinese words of things around them. They were also observed to try to use new vocabulary in their sentences.

The students also exhibit changes in terms of pride. They are now proud if they know the Balinese words for things around them or when they can bring new vocabulary for their friends. They also sing more Balinese songs during recess



time. These increase in use of the language, interest in the language, and enjoyment in using the language is the foundation of future learning of Balinese language. Even though students may not yet be fully conversant in Balinese language, they have good foundation to build upon. Teachers hoped that this foundation will be beneficial to foster their love and use of the language once formal instruction of the Balinese language start in the primary and secondary school.

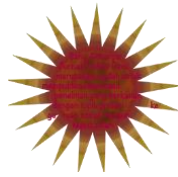
V. Kesimpulan

The implementation of Balinese Language Day in TK Kumara Bhuwana II Denpasar is done in accordance to government edict and the school's intention to prevent the extinction of Balinese language. Despite the problems in its implementation, Balinese Language Day program has managed to improve students' use of the language, their sense of pride of the language, as well as their motivation to learn the language in the future.

The present study is aimed at providing a descriptive account of the implementation of Balinese language day in a kindergarten in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia. The design of the study naturally brings a number of limitations, including but not limited to, the lack of sample to provide a generalization and the limited data collected due to time constraints. However, considering the limited studies conducted on the preservation of Balinese language, the present study is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge of Balinese language education and preservation, in general, and Balinese language education and preservation involving early learners. Notwithstanding its worth, future researcher are encouraged to perform more rigorous research which will be able to provide empirical evidence on the effect of Balinese language day program on students' Balinese language mastery. Furthermore, future researchers can compare the implementation of Balinese language program between urban and rural schools, considering the difference in linguistics and geographical factors between the schools and students.

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