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Ngidih: A Way of Balinese Language Maintenance

*I Putu Oka Suardana¹⁾, Anita Kurnia Rachman²⁾, Ixsir Eliya³⁾, Desy Irafadillah Effendi⁴⁾
Achmad Ja'far Sodik⁵⁾*

¹Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, ITP Markandeya Bali

Email: okasuardana@markandeyabali.ac.id

phone: 08174196488

² Fakultas Sosial Humaniora, Universitas Insan Budi Utomo

Email: anita27rachman@gmail.com

³ Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Negeri Malang

Email: ixsir.eliya.2202119@students.um.ac.id

⁴ Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Samudra

Email: desyirafadillah@unsam.ac.id

⁵ Fakultas Pascasarjana, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim

Email: 220104310018@student.uin-malang.ac.id

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Abstract

This research was analyzed using a sociolinguistic perspective. The purpose of this study was to identify, classify, and analyze efforts to maintenance the language used in bridal ceremonies in Bali. This study used qualitative research with the source of data is speech carried out at the *ngidih* procession in a wedding ceremony in Bali. The results of this study show that the Balinese language maintenance in the *ngidih* procession is very strong. The whole series of *ngidih activities* still use Balinese language. It's just that there is a shift in language and also mix codes. The shift of the Balinese language occurred in the structure of using *Alus Singgih* into other forms. The code-mixing that occurs is a mixture between the use of Balinese language and Indonesian language. The results of this study show that in an effort to retain the Balinese language in the *ngidih* procession, there is a cultural shift and also code-mixing. This happens because of the context of speech, the experience of speakers, the social context of speakers, speech partners, and also the development of language use in Bali.

Keywords: Balinese Language Retention, Ngidih, Code-Mixing, Language Shift

Corresponding Author:

I Putu Oka Suardana, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, ITP Markandeya Bali

Email: okasuardana@markandeyabali.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dianalisis menggunakan perspektif sosiolinguistik. Tujuan dari studi ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi, mengklasifikasi, dan menganalisis upaya pemertahanan bahasa yang digunakan dalam upacara penganten di Bali. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan sumber data berupa tutur kata yang dilaksanakan pada prosesi ngidih dalam suatu upacara pernikahan di Bali. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemertahanan bahasa Bali dalam prosesi ngidih sangat kuat. Seluruh rangkaian kegiatan ngidih masih menggunakan bahasa Bali. Hanya saja terjadi pergeseran bahasa dan juga pencampuran kode. Pergeseran bahasa Bali terjadi pada struktur penggunaan Alus Singgih menjadi bentuk lain. Pencampuran kode yang terjadi merupakan campuran antara penggunaan bahasa Bali dan bahasa Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam upaya mempertahankan bahasa Bali pada prosesi ngidih, terdapat pergeseran budaya dan juga pencampuran kode. Hal ini terjadi karena konteks tuturan, pengalaman penutur, konteks sosial penutur, lawan tutur, serta perkembangan penggunaan bahasa di Bali.

Kata kunci: Pemertahanan Bahasa Bali, Ngidih, Pencampuran Kode, Pergeseran Bahasa

Introduction

Indonesia has many regional languages. Indonesia has 746 regional languages (Mustika, 2018). One of the many regional languages is Balinese. Balinese in general is the language of communication used by the Balinese tribe with domicile on the island of Bali or outside the island of Bali. However, Balinese language users are not only limited to the Balinese but also other tribes who are on the island of Bali and often interact with Balinese language users. In terms of the number of users, Balinese can be said to be one of the regional languages with the most users. Currently more than one million active Balinese users are recorded (Suciartini, 2018).

Although classified as a regional language with quite a lot of users, Balinese is also not free from the threat of extinction. This occurs as a result of the population starting to switch to other languages as their mother tongue. Balinese is no longer a mother tongue for some Balinese people, especially for urban communities (Mustika, 2018). In addition, Bali has also become one of the tourist destinations, resulting in a shift in linguistic perspectives. Balinese is considered less sexy for most people so it is not taught as a mother tongue. Whereas language not only functions as a means of communication but also as a tool to maintain culture (Sri Utami et al., 2021).

However, in the case of Balinese, the sense of belonging and pride in the language is very high. This provides a unique situation for the preservation of the Balinese language. On the one hand, the Balinese language is beginning to erode, while on the other hand, community pride is still very high. This shows that the Balinese language still has an influence on the mindset and pride of the Balinese. Tribal identity itself refers to a sense of belonging that influences the thinking, perception, and behavior of their tribal group (Sitinjak & Harianja, 2022). This situation makes Balinese people a bilingual society with a minimum of two languages. Balinese is still consciously used in daily life and is massively studied even though it is not the mother tongue anymore. The bilingualism of the Balinese people has also led to a shift in the Balinese language in addition to maintaining the Balinese language towards forms such as code-mixing and code-switching. The use of different languages in certain contexts also requires a lot of code mixing and code switching (Azlan, 2019).

The preservation of Balinese is also supported by the cultural influence that is still very strong in Bali. All traditional and cultural activities still use Balinese as an introduction. Balinese has several levels of speech starting from the highest level (*Alus Singgih*) to the lowest level (*kepara*) (Darmasetiyawan, 2022). The highest level is commonly used in formal occasions and

also conversations to respected people or glorified religious leaders. The lowest level of language is used in everyday conversations within the family or between friends. The use of various levels of speech in traditional activities in Bali is very high. Starting from the highest level of use among the elders and traditional processions, to the lowest level of language used to communicate for citizens. Therefore, the maintenance of Balinese language is quite strong even though there has been a shift in the mother tongue for some people. One of the Balinese language maintenance activities in terms of culture is the *ngidih* ceremony.

Language, something that lives and develops, will always experience changes and shifts following the development of time (Mbeti, 2007). Changes and shifts also occur in the Balinese language. One of the cultural and linguistic shifts occurs in the procession of the *ngidih* ceremony. *Ngidih* is one of the processes in Balinese traditional marriage that must be done by Balinese Hindus. Etymologically, *ngidih* means to ask. In the Balinese Dictionary, *ngidih* is defined as asking for something. While in the context of marriage, *ngidih* means proposing or asking for a prospective bride to the family which is carried out by the besan family together with traditional elders.

The *ngidih* procession is a mandatory procession from a series of Balinese traditional wedding ceremonies or often referred to as *pawiwahan*. *Ngidih* itself can be divided into three types, namely being matched (*atepanga*), *merangkat*, and *ngidih* (Gede Budasi & Wayan Suryasa, 2021). The *pawiwahan* ceremony, including *ngidih*, according to Balinese Hinduism is part of the Catur Asrama, which are four stages in life (Sumarjayanti et al., 2020).

Ngidih, as one of the processes leading to the marriage stage, has a unique ritual. The *ngidih* process begins with a meeting between representatives of the male family and traditional elders from the male area and representatives of the female family and traditional elders from the female neighborhood. The meeting between these two representatives eventually led to the *ngidih* discourse which discussed many things. One of them is the reason for the man to propose to the woman and the reason for the woman's family to accept the man. In addition, in this process there are often arguments between the two parties to show the strength of the argument. This practice of argument is common in the *ngidih* procession. In addition to argumentation, the procession is also filled with advice about life for the prospective bride and groom.

In this procession there are many exchanges of speech between the two parties. The speech used in this procession is Balinese *Alus Singgih* or Balinese language with the most subtle level. In its function, the utterances used in the *ngidih* procession have many meanings. Both implicitly and explicitly. The utterances given are also full of meaning and have their own way of presenting based on the region and also the character of the family.

Supposedly, the use of speech in the *ngidih* procession is Balinese *Alus Singgih*. However, along with the times, the use of Balinese in the *ngidih* procession began to vary. Indeed, it still uses subtle language and does not use coarse language. But in some parts, the use of the most subtle Balinese language began to be not full. There began to be changes in the speech used. For example, the use of a little standard subtle language (*Alus Sor*) instead of high level subtle language (*Alus Singgih*), then there is code mixing with Indonesian, the use of colloquial Balinese (*kepara*), and other changes that are not realized in practice.

These changes are not realized by the community due to the development of the times and also the fading of the use of high-level subtle Balinese (*Alus Singgih*). The change in the use of this type of language also causes new variations in the *ngidih* procession. The emergence of these variations makes the speech procession of *ngidih* discourse in Balinese weddings more interesting. On the other hand, the emergence of these variations certainly also needs to be traced the causes

and impacts. Whether the impact of this speech will have a negative effect or even be able to enrich the variants of Balinese language use in the *ngidih* procession. All these changes are certainly an interesting thing in terms of Balinese language preservation.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach as a basis. Qualitative approach is used to fully describe a phenomenon in the field without any researcher intervention in it (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The sociolinguistic analysis technique is used to see the phenomenon of language maintenance in Balinese society comprehensively. In addition, this approach was chosen to see how the process of language maintenance and also the shift in the use of Balinese in the *ngidih* ceremony.

The data source in this research is the speech during the *ngidih* procession in Balinese wedding culture. The speech that occurs between the traditional leaders and the bride and groom's family is recorded well through the recording process, then the whole procession is also observed in detail and recorded in the observation sheet. Then interviews were conducted with an open question system to the parties involved in the *ngidih* procession so that data were obtained in the form of social context, speaker experience, and other things related to the subject's language skills. The subjects of this research are all parties involved in the *ngidih* procession such as traditional elders and the bride's family. This research was also conducted on *ngidih* activities in several families on the island of Bali. The selection of research subjects is based on families with existing social strata in Bali starting with ordinary social strata to nobility.

After the data were collected, the data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman qualitative research approach. This data analysis through the data triangulation stage begins with data reduction. The collected data were selected in order to obtain data in accordance with the research context. Furthermore, the data were coded to facilitate presentation and classification. After the data is collected and reduced, the next step is to draw conclusions. Based on the results of this study, conclusions are drawn on the efforts to preserve the Balinese language in the *ngidih* procession and also the language shifts that occur in it.

Result and Discussion

The results of this study indicate a strong Balinese language preservation effort in the *ngidih* procession. This is shown by the full use of Balinese during the *ngidih* procession. The Balinese language used is the highest level Balinese language (Alus Singgih) in almost the entire event. The use of this high level of Balinese indicates a strong mastery of the Balinese language. In addition, the use of high levels also shows a clear language preservation. There are several factors that influence the strong use of this high level of Balinese. These factors include (1) pride in the Balinese language, (2) loyalty to the Balinese language, and (3) traditional responsibilities.

The first factor is a sense of pride in using Balinese. This feeling of pride is shown by using Balinese fully in traditional events such as *ngidih*. This feeling of pride also shows the prestige of their language choice (Suciartini, 2018). The pride shown is also related to the value of politeness, especially to new people and elders. The use of Balinese, especially at high levels, shows respect for traditional elders (Ramadani et al., 2018). Associations in daily life also give users a sense of pride when using Balinese, especially high levels so that speakers are seen as having a wide social circle. It is considered common among neighbors to be able to speak using the local language (Farisiyah & Zamzani, 2018).

The second factor is loyalty to the Balinese language. Loyalty to the Balinese language is shown by continuing to use Balinese as an introduction to traditional activities amid the onslaught

of Indonesian and foreign languages. Traditional activities, such as ngidih, fully use Balinese. This shows the loyalty of the population to the local language. This loyalty is directly proportional to the pride in using Balinese. Not only that, the loyalty of users in Balinese also means that the preservation of Balinese through the ngidih procession can run well. Loyalty to this minority language certainly requires time and experience so that it can criticize the language (Margana & Rasman, 2021).

The third factor is the factor of customary responsibility. The preservation of the Balinese language is also quite influenced by this factor. Customary responsibilities in Balinese society are very large. One of the responsibilities is to maintain Balinese culture. Balinese language is one of them. The obligation of traditional leaders indirectly maintains the Balinese language and maintains its existence by continuing to use it in every traditional event. Then in this ngidih procession, the obligation of traditional elders is to lead the discussion and also provide a lot of advice in the procession. Of course this makes someone who becomes a traditional elder inevitably to use Balinese, especially high-level language. The results of this study also show the large role of traditional elders in the preservation of Balinese in the ngidih procession. This factor occurs due to social, political, customary aspects, and socioeconomic pressures (Qiu & Qiu, 2022).

Although most of the ngidih procession uses high-level Balinese, the results also show a shift in the use of Balinese to the medium level, from Alus Singgih to Alus Madya. The emergence of language shifts in the ngidih procession has a specific purpose and is influenced by several factors. The factors of this shift are caused by (1) the context of the conversation, (2) the experience of the speaker, (3) the social context of the speech partner, (4) and the level of education of the speaker. Then the purpose in this language shift is to dilute the conversation and facilitate the understanding of speech partners.

*Wastan titiange Wayan Rata, minab semeton titian saking Menanga
sami niki sampun uninga, duaning ring keseharian titiang, akeh
iringang titiang ring bebetohan, utawi tajen.*

(My name is Wayan Rata, perhaps those of you from Menanga already know who I am because in your daily lives, many of you who are here today often meet me at the cockfighting arena)

The above quotation shows a language shift from Alus Singgih to Alus Madya in order to break the ice. The context of the conversation at that time was the introduction of the traditional leader to start the procession and saw the family and bridesmaids looking tense. The speaker deliberately changed the language pattern from Alus Singgih to Alus Madya with the aim of provoking laughter from those present. The lure of them already knowing each other in cockfighting gambling activities spontaneously had a relaxing effect on everyone present. Everyone laughed with a more relaxed joking style in the Alus Madya pattern. This is very much realized by the speakers considering the use of Alus Singgih language gives a formal, polite, and distant impression. It will be difficult to break the ice if you keep using Alus Singgih. The speaker consciously shifts the pattern to a more relaxed language but still seems formal and able to break the atmosphere.

The ability to change patterns quickly requires an extraordinary level of experience and knowledge. The speaker understands the situation of the procession which is rather tense, then knows the background of the speech partners and the audience so that they are able to break the atmosphere by changing patterns from high-level language to lower levels. In addition, the speaker's experience of being a speaker in formal activities illustrates that not many are able to

understand Alus Singgih Balinese well. Therefore, speakers choose to shift the use of language patterns to be lower at certain times so that they can be understood by the entire audience.

Wastan titiange Wayan Rata, minab semeton titian saking Menanga sami niki sampun uninga, duaning ring keseharian titiang, akeh iringang titiang ring bebetohan, utawi tajen.

(My name is Wayan Rata, perhaps those of you from Menanga already know who I am because in your daily lives, many of you who are here today often meet me at the cockfighting arena)

In this same excerpt we also see that the speaker deliberately uses everyday words to replace other formal words so that the audience understands that they often meet in daily activities.

In addition to language shifts, in an effort to preserve Balinese in the ngidih procession there are findings in the form of code mixing. The code mixing that occurs is a mixture of Balinese and Indonesian. This code mixing feels very natural considering that Indonesian has been used throughout Indonesia and has been mastered by all Indonesian people. Not only that, this mixing also feels natural because in formal daily interactions in government or communication with other tribes using Indonesian. The mixing that occurs is only limited to the use of Indonesian vocabulary in the use of Balinese in the ngidih procession. Code mixing does not interfere with the communication process and is not disputed by the Balinese language users. Even this code mix already feels very natural and is not realized by the Balinese people. This code mixing is considered commonplace and not problematic in terms of social communication.

Related to language use and code mixing. Based on the results of the study also showed the age range of speakers in the use of language types. Speakers who use high-level Balinese purely come from the age range of 65-70 years. Usually the speakers are traditional elders who have been very fluent in using high-level Balinese. These elders also take on the role of people who are asked for opinions and provide important advice in the world of marriage. Therefore, the language used is usually formal to show wisdom and experience. Then the speakers who still mix codes are traditional leaders in the age range of 35-59 years. This group of speakers is usually called the young group who are still in the learning stage to master high-level Balinese fluently. In addition, this group is also accustomed to using Indonesian in everyday life so that they unconsciously mix Indonesian code into Balinese. Not only that, this age group also often takes the position of a relaxed elder so that later it will be easy to be asked for opinions and not too serious.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that the preservation of Balinese language in the ngidih procession is very strong. The whole series of ngidih activities still use Balinese. It's just that there are language shifts and code mixes. Balinese language shifts occur in the structure of using Alus Singgih into other forms. The code mix that occurs is a mixture between the use of Balinese and Indonesian. The results of this study indicate that in an effort to preserve the Balinese language in the ngidih procession, there are cultural shifts and code mixes. This happens because of the context of the conversation, the experience of the speaker, the social context of the speaker, the speech partner, and also the development of language use in Bali.

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