

LANGUAGE PLAY AND RELIGION

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Abstract

As “homo luden”, human beings fond to play using everything surround them, including the language they use to communicate. This paper is intended to describe the play on word exploited by some Hindu Dharma practitioners in order explain several aspects of religion they believe in, such as god and its power, king as its manifestation, temples or holly places, and important days the practitioners celebrate, etc. By using data collected from messages sent by my senior high WA Group, I found that in order to strengthen the religious followers’ belief, they often create syncretic expressions by connecting semantically unrelated words from several languages of either belong to the same language family, or ones that belong to historically different language groups.

Key words: Language, Play, Religion, Syncretic

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are homo luden. It means that human being is “fond of playing creature” (Cook, 2000: 41; Wijana, 2019: 1; Daeng, 1982: 212). In wading across their life, people do many playing activities, even it was said that playing is activity that cannot be neglected in human life because it constitutes important part and means to mature them. Depending on various factors which might limit them, human beings will create various kinds of games whose forms will always develop according to their age. One of those games is “language play”. Language as the most important means of communication which will always be brought by their speakers can be used to create various language play (pun) for fulfilling their various communicative needs. As such, various kinds of jocular text exist amid the human life, such as riddle, cartoon, funny poems, and humorous songs, etc. This language play can be found in many kinds of human life aspect, and has important and central role to be used in their life. One of human life aspect which is extensively influenced by punning activities is religious life which will become the focus of this study. This matter seems have not been studied seriously by the linguists, particularly in Indonesia. Zdenek (2007: 299-300) states that language has a number of important roles in human life, and from those roles, a language analysis seems incomplete if it is not accompanied by analysis that concerns with analysis about speakers' creativity in using language as their verbal means of communication.

In any society that believes in God's power and any kind of power that equals to it, religion seems or would be the most precious life aspect among many other social aspects, such as economy, politics, art, etc, Accordingly, it is not surprising if there many people are willing to sacrifice their souls for defending their faith. There are many religions in the world. There are religions with big number of practitioners, there are ones with medium number of followers, and

there are ones with small number of diciples. For achieving various religious purposes, such as spreading the teachings, to maintain and increase followers, to strengthen and reinforce their beliefs, religious teachings must be deepen and experienced either for the seek of their own as well as for all community members. Therefore, in every ocassion in irder to spread of religious teachings, people often found the skill of religious leaders, or religious followers in varieties of groups to play language, or linguistic punning which are strongly believed to be true eventhough they do not have adequate knowledges about the origin of linguistic elements they used to play. For example, in spreading or convincing Islam teachings, the Islamic leaders or mullah often combine elements that come from two different culture which are commonly called syncretism in effort of interpreting various matters that are related to their religion. Those matters may concern with prophet names, religious leaders, places, praying guides, food names, etc. The results are new interpretations which are expected to be able to compete with, to replace or change the previous interpretations. The combination can also be carry out through metalingual failures of a word in the same language. For example, the word *Sleman*, one place name in Yogyakarta state, which is based on Purbatjaraka's interpretation comes from *Salimar* 'forest for raising up elephant' is creatively related with *Sulaiman*, a prophet's name in Islam who is able to speak and understand variuos language creatures (Wahyudi, 2015: 44; Wiharyanto: 2017, 14). A place name *deresan* in which {-an} in Javanese grammatically means 'place', historically might be the place has connection with activities of tapping tree to extract sap (sugar palm). The tapper it self is called *penderes* 'tapper'. However, for the purpose of religion teaching spreading, the name of place is mixed with Arabic word *darus* from stem root *drs* (Bauer, 1988: 25). This verb relates with any activities of learning Koran, the Islam holly book. Finally, the place then is interpreted as a place for learning the holly book. Traditional shadow puppet leather characters, such as *Petruk*, *Bagong*, and *Semar* are not missed from such a punning fondness. *Petruk* and *Bagong*, Semar's sons who respectively have long body and nose, big body and mouth are serached its correpondence in Arabic, and finnally yield the word *Faturuk* 'excessing the limit' and *Bhago* 'just leave it'. *Apem* name of food made of rice plour is creatively corresponded with *afuim* 'forgiveness, pardon'. Yudhistira or Dharmawangsa's weapon in the shape of book as a symbol of science or knowledge to be the best weapon in human life origanlly came from Sanskrit is looked for its Arabic correspondence and becoming *Kalimat Syahadat* 'Islamic formula concerning Allah (the only god) and the prophet Mohammad as the god's messanger'. It is indeed that syncretism is not always related to Arabic. Javanese internal punning can also be found. For example, the Javanese word *seket* 'fifty' is played to be *cekat-ceket* 'to work fast' or 'always be ready', and then it is associated with people who are already fifty must prepare themselves to always remember God because the death is getting nearer.

This paper will discuss syncretism phenomena found in group of people deepening Hindu Religion teachings. In this regard, it is often found various syncretism phenomena which are playing Sanskrit with Indonesian, Sundanese, and other foreign languages which are actually very difficult to find their interrelatedness. Hoeweever, by the skillfulness of certain people (might be religious leaders), they are able to relate the elements of those languages.

METHOD

Nearly all data presented in this paper come from my WAG of my senior high state friends of Singaraja Bali. There are many among them, in their old age more intensively deepen their religious teachings although there are also possibilities that they have already done it when they are living or studying far away outside Bali in order to keep preserved their religion amidst the competitions of other bigger religions, especially Islam and Christian, and Catholic. Those data are further classified in such way based on their punning type, and motivations underlying their creations. This research has central role in order to understand more about the close relation between the language use and their speakers' ideology, especially which concerns with religion teaching comprehension and its maintenance efforts. Most data are delivered in Indonesian, and some of them in Balinese, and only a few of them in Balinese. With regard to Data in Balinese, for ease of understanding, will be translated into Indonesian.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The followings are my research findings that are classified based on languages to play.

SANSKRIT AND LOCAL LANGUAGES

Hindu teaching comes from India. For this, although the practitioners have owned the concept *Tuhan Yang Mahaesa* 'the only God', i.e. *Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, they still can not release themselves from the concept of *Trimurti* 'three gods or goddess that rule the world'. Those are *Brahma* 'the creator', *Wisnu* 'the care taker', and *Ciwa* 'the destroyer'. These three Gods are regarded as the representative power of the only God as the world creator, care taker, and destroyer everything exists in this world. In Hindu teachings they are represented by three sacred words, i.e. Ang (Brahma), Ung (Wisnu), and Mang (Ciwa). Represented by the initial letters, the three gods are then symbolized with three sacred letters A,U,M. And, through “sandhi” process, in which A and U combination yields O, the three letters are then pronounced as Om. For the strong believers, this sacred letter together with all of its manifestation as something sacred, magical, and powerful, and to be believed will bring various miracles if it is uttered everytime in any occasion. For instance, example (1) tells about the power of uttering *Ang, Ung, Mang* while doing *pranayama* 'breath arranging' will be able to move rain.

1. Satu hal, dan kamu pasti bisa menolak hujan atau memindahkan hujan. Seperti ini caranya. Tarik nafas, Pranayama. Pas pada waktu menahan nafas bayangkan langit biru Jika sudah terbuka lebar melihat langit biru, sebut ANG, UNG, MANG. Arahkan pandangan searah hembusan angin.

'One thing, and you will surely be able to refuse or move the rain. The way is like this. Exhale breath, arrange your breathing. Precisely when you hold your breath, imagine the blue sky. If it is already widely open, and you see the blue sky, pronounce ANG, UNG, MANG. Direct your view to where the wind blows'.

The belief to *Ang, Ung, Mang* is then created by the smart people to create something existing within the society. Accidentally, the nasal sounds yield from this

three sounds, and through permutation technique, someone can get word *maung*. This formula is then associated with *maung* in Sundanese that is similar to imitation or onomatopoeia of tiger sound in this language (See Allan, 1986: 97-98). For example, *Maung Bandung* is a popular call for the Bandung Soccer Team in which Bandung is the capital West Java state. This phenomenon indicates that the creators seem very skillful the onomatopoeic word “tiger”, the mythological vehicle of goddess Durga. So, what they have created got its legitimation. Then, from this success, the practitioners increase their belief. What possibly makes this creation successful is the existence of facts that tiger or *maung* is the king of jungle, the strong and scaring animal, and it conforms with the image of Durga who determines human mortality. The strong believers can not see the fact that in Bali there is also an animal name whose sound is similar to those three sacred letters. However, its referent has bad connotation, i.e. *kaung* 'male deer hog'. So, it would be very insulting and unfortunate if the three letter formulas are related to this disgusting animal. Conversely, with tiger or *maung*, there are a lot of compatibilities. If the Malay people want to create this three letter formula, their creation will yield a more satisfactory result because the sound of tiger in Malay which is later becoming Indonesian is more precise with those three formula, i.e. *aum*. However, the influence of Hindu in Malay is not so visible that this kind of creation can not be found. Moreover, they believe that *maung* is creation of Prabu Siliwangi. Then, it is created that Siliwangi is the short form *Siwa* by *li* and *ngi* omission. They also believe without thinking it more critically. Why the acronym pattern is omitting *li* and *ngi* instead of *si* and *wa* to yield meaningless formula. They are also very sure that a king can create the word *maung*, instead of the society or language speakers. The discussion then turns to three dominant colors of the wild animal, i.e. white, black, and red which are also accidentally able to connect with the color symbols of the three goddesses, red for Brahma, black for Wisnu, and white for Siwa. Finally, the creation moves to three river names running in West Java which are also accidentally compatible with those three colors. Those rivers are *Cibereum*, *Cihideung*, and *Cibodas* that respectively represent red, black, and white without asking further: Why those small rivers represent the goddess instead of the bigger ones. With regard to these facts, notice discourse (2), (3), and (4) below:

(2) Harimau itu wahana Dewi Durga (masih Siwa Siddhanta) bukan kebetulan. Raja Siliwangi menciptakan kata *maung* untuk nama harimau wahana Dewi Durga (Siwa Siddhanta) untuk mengenali *Mang Ang*, dan *Ung*. Sekarang nama *Maung* hanya akrab/biasa untuk nama harimau di tanah Sunda.

The tiger is Dewi Durga vehicle (still Siwa Siddhanta), not accidental. King

Siliwangi creates word *maung* for the name of Dewi Durga's vehicle (Siwa Siddhanta) to recognize *Mang*, *Ang*, and *Ung*. Now, the word *maung* is only familiar to name tiger in Sunda Land.

(3) Nama raja Sunda Prabhu Wangi, pengganti-penggantinya disebut Silih Wangi...Sri Baduga Maharaja adalah raja pengganti yang kemudian terkenal dengan nama Prabu Siliwangi. Sri Baduga memiliki salah satu istri Mualaf yang bernama Subanglangrang. Dari istri ini berputra Kian Santang, Rara Santang, dan Walang Sungsang. Rara Santang menikah dengan Pangeran Mesir melahirkan Sunan Gunung Jati (Cucu Prabu Siliwangi).

'The name of Sunda king Prabu Wangi, the successors are called Silih Wangi...Sri baduga Maharaja The successor king who is later famous as Prabu Siliwangi. One of his wife is “mualaf” names Subanglangrang. From her he has sons. name Kian Santang, Rara Santang, and Waklang Sungsang. Rara Santang got married with Prince of Egypt and give birth to Sunan Gunung Jati (grand sonof Prabu Siliwangi).

(4) *Tridatu* dikenal juga dalam budaya Sunda. *Cihedeung, Cibereum, dan Cibodas. Hitam, merah, dan putih.* Lambangnya air, tanah, dan api besar yang dapat dihubungkan dengan matahari.

'Tridatu is also known in Sundanese culture. Cihedung, Cibereum, and Cibodas. Black, red and white. The symbols are water, land, and fire. And, big fire can be associated with the sun.

INDONESIAN AND SANSKRIT

The creators often feel unsatisfactory with the semiotic interpretations which just constitute interpretation of nonverbal signs in term of merely interpreting the nonverbal symbols or understanding the visual symbols of the religion. Accordingly, the interpretation will sometimes penetrate to endeavors of relating the Sanskrit words with Indonesian. For example discourse (5) and (6) below is efforts to relate the proper name *Indonesia* using acrostic technique (initial sound combination) with Hindu gods'names coming from Sanskrit. This effort is done without considering that the word Indonesia is not borrowed from Sanskrit. Meanwhile, discourse (6) is metalingually mixing Indonesian word *angsa* 'swan', long necked animal with Sanskrit word *hamsa* 'swan', and analyse its consisting syllabels into ham 'god' and So 'hamba'. Strangely, they are not aware of how *so* can change into *Sa*, and *dikau* 'you' can change into *hamba* 'me' in fact both of them are distinct pronouns. *Hamba* is first person pronoun, and *dikau* is second person pronoun.

(5) Benarkah nama negara kita Indonesia diberi nama sesuai dengan akronim para Dewa yang bersemayam di 9 Penjuru Mata Hari: Angin.

1. Iswara (Timur)
2. Nagendra (Timur Laut Dewa Sambhu)
3. Dhganesh (Tenggara Dewa Maheswara)
4. Ongkara (Tengah Dewa Siwa)
5. Nagapasa (Senjata mahadewa arahnya Barat)
6. Ersandya (Dewa Rudra arahnya Barat Daya)
7. Sri Devi (saktinya Dewa Wisnu arahnya Utara)
8. Iwabahaya (Barat Laut Dewa Sangkara)
9. Andaksa (Arahnya selatan Dewa Brahma)

(6) 'Is that right, our country is named Indonesia in accordance with the acronym of Hindu Godess' names living the nine directions:

1. Iswara (east)
2. Nagendra (north east: Sambu God)
3. Dhganesh (south east: Maheswara God)
4. Ongkara (centre: Siwa God)
5. Nagapasa (west: Mahadewa's weapon)
6. Ersandya (south west: Rudra God)

7. Sri Devi (north: the power of Wisnu God)

8. Iwabahaya (north west: Sangkara god)

9. Andaksa (south: Brahma God)

(6) Angsa ...binatang yang bijaksana, karena bisa mengambil makanan yang bercampur dengan lumpur. Kata *angsa* aslinya dari kata Hamsa (=adalah nafas kita yang bersuara mantra secara otomatis). Kita bernafas 216 kali sehari. Saat mengeluarkan nafas keluar mantra *Ham...* dan saat menghirup nafas berbunyi *So...So* = Tuhan. Ham = Hamba. Dengan demikian, suara keluar masuk *So Ham..* artinya sejatinya *Hamba* adalah *Dikau*.

Para Yogi menggunakan *So Ham* ini saat menarik dan menghembuskan nafas.

'Swan is a wise animal because it can get its foods that are mixing with mud. The word *angsa* originates from *hamsa* (= is our breath that sounds like sacred formula automatically). We are taking breath 216 times a day. When exhaling we produce formula *ham*, and when inhaling we make formula *So*. *So* = God. Ham = I. So the out and in sound *So Ham*. It actually means I is you. The Yogies use *So Ham* when they are inhaling and exhaling breath.

INDONESIAAN, LOCAL AND VARIOUS FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The problem is getting more complicated when there are mixture elements of various languages. For example Sundanese is confused with English and Javanese. *Sunda*, the name of Sundanese people land is believed coming from *Sonada*. This is word of Sundanese Buhun which means 'sun'. And then from here the creators associate it with English *Sun*, and later amazingly, it is connected with *Sunday* 'day belongs to sun' and *Monday* 'day belongs to moon'. Even, more complicatedly, how they can connect *Ra* 'sun god' of Egypt with various language elements coming across other languages which do not have diachronic relatedness, such as with *negara* 'country' that comes from Old Javanese that possibly have relation with Old Javanese or Sanskrit. However, they never consider its status whether as a root or a meaningless syllable. *Bendera* is Portuguese borrowings whose *ra* element does not have any sense. So does *rahardiyani* in Old Javanese and *rahyat* taken from Arabic. For more clearly see (7), (8), and (9) below:

(7) Sunda = Sunoda. Sunday = the day belong to surya (sun).

Monday = the day belong to the moon, etc.

(8) Sun = Raditya 'sun' = Radite 'sunday'.

Area or region concept = "Naga-Ra/Nega-Ra 'country'

Country Symbol = "Bender-Ra" 'flag'

The title of Nusantara Kings = "Ra-Hyang 'kong'

The title of royal family = "Ra-keyan dan Ra-Ha-Dian (Raden)

Constitutional concept = Ra-si, Ratu, Ra-ma

People = "Ra-Hayat"

Ra is the ancient Egyptian sun god or is short element for the element of Radium. An Example of Ra is the Egyptian god who had a hawk head. An Example of Ra is an element that is used by the chemist.

BALINESE AND JAVANESE

Rangda which synchronically means 'the queen of demon in Balinese mythology, diachronically is connected with Javanese word *randa* 'widow' like found in phrase *Randeng Dirah* 'widow at Dirah'. Phonologically, it is no problem that concerns with sound correspondence regarding the phonological changes of [n] becoming [ng] and [ɔ] becoming [ɔ̄]. However, are people practising black magic in Bali always a widow because the word expressing 'widow in Balinese is not *randa* but *balu*. Eventhough it is almost indisputable, in this matter, there is still any possibility of endeavor to conform those two words which actually do not have any historical connection. The more difficult problem is an effort which tries to connect the Javanese word *basuki* that synchronically means 'safe, glorious' such as found in idiomatic expression *Jer basuki mawa beya* 'to achieve life comfort needs fund' is associated with the Balinese mother temple *Besakih*. They never consider that there are many possibilities in sacred place naming practises. One of them might be related to the location of the temple, like most temple naming in Java. The condition is getting more intricate when there is efforts to connect the temple name with Sanskrit word *Vasudha* 'earth with all of its content'

BALINESE AND SUNDANESE

The Balinese Hindu followers have their days crowded with various religious ceremonies. It can be said that there is no day without ceremony whether they are limited scope ceremonies, or ones of having a wider scope. Big and small holidays spread in Balinese calendar. Accordingly, the Balinese society is given a wide autonomy to arrange its national holidays. With regard to this matter, there are two interesting data to analyse. Those are *Hari Raya Galungan* 'Galungan Holiday' and *Hari Raya Kuningan* 'Kuningan Holiday'. Both holidays are celebrated every six months or 210 days based on traditional Balinese calendar. Galungan is celebrated for the victory of *dharma* 'truth' against *adharma* 'untruth' which is usually described by the fight of Indra God against King Maya Denawa. The word Galungan is associated with Sundanese word *galung* that means 'shaking', and the problem is getting more complicated because it is then related to Javanese word *gelut* that means 'fight'. In fact, in Balinese society the base word *galung* only occurs with suffix {-an} to mean 'holiday', and its verb with {N-} *ngegalung*, and it is never related to nuance of 'shaking' or 'fighting'.

Finally, Balinese words can also be confused with other Balinese ones. For example, in explaining the meaning of *hari raya Kuningan* 'Kuningan holiday'. This holiday is celebrated ten days after Galungan. In this holiday, as suggested by its name, the Balinese people prepare nasi kuning 'yellow rice'. From this activity, it has already clear what *Kuningan* means. It is not other than a celebration to make 'yellow rice'. And, it is certainly the yellow color has connection to the color symbol of one of Hindu goddess. However, for giving more philosophical meaning, the word kuning 'yellow' is given a new interpretation. This word according to them is derived from {ka-an} and *uning* 'to know'. *Uning* is polite form of Balinese word *tawang* 'to know'. So, the holiday is celebrated in order to remind the followers to always know and remember themselves and their god, the creator without considering its “sandhi” possibility to become *koningan*, instead of vowel omission becoming *kuningan*.

The language play can also be carried out by permutting words in one language which have phonological similarities. For instance, in Balinese the word *aluh* 'easy', *ulah* 'perfunctory' or *ulah* 'drive out', and *alih* 'to look for'. The four words can be played in such way to become advice formula to be used as way of life. Consider discourse (7) below:

Aluhe alih, Da ulahe aluhe, Da ulah-aluh

'look for the ease one', Do not drive out the ease. Do not do as you wish'

In a book that I have read, I found an analysis which tries to relate compound word *Kubu Tambahan* 'place name in the north most Bali island' (Prama, 2010). The word in this book is interpreted as an Indonesian word *tambah* 'plus'. And, from here the writer tries to give interpretation as 'positive value or positive energy possessed by the village'. The writer did not see the other possible meaning of *tambah*. In Balinese there is also a word *tambah* that means agricultural instrument 'cangkul' which in other places is expressed by its dialectal correspondent *bonceng*. Although it still needs further investigation, this interpretation must also be considered because North Bali was also a fertile agricultural area before urbanization from the south area, beside the word *kubu* that means 'hut'.

In this book the writer also tried to analyze word *Sanur*, name of vilage situated in the southern tip of the island in which one of its syllable *nur* is interpreted coming from Arabic that means 'light'. So, Sanur means 'one light'. The writer did not explain how the Arabic word might be borrowed to form the village name. Traditional songs also did not miss to play by the creators with semiotic interpretation. For example, the following (8) which gives interpretation to "pupuh pucung" *Bibi Anu* 'Aunty Anu'

Bibi Anu 'Hai, aunty Anu'

Laman payu luas mandus 'If you are going to take a bath'

Antenge tekekang 'Tighten your sash'

Yatnain ngaba mesui 'Take care, do not forget to bring "mesui"'

Tiyuk puntul, bawang anggon pasikepan 'a dull knife and onion for the amulet'

It is difficult to know how the believers can make interpretations to word *bawang* 'onion' and *mesui* 'massoia aromatica'. Name of tree whose skin can be use to make medicine for healing various diseases (Sugono et als., 2014, 884). Based on their sound similarities they can associate these two words with *prabawa* 'behaviour, attitude' and *meseh* 'to make up' inspite of excellent interpretation toward phrase *tiyuk puntul* 'dull knife' with 'dullness, stupidity', *anteng* 'sash' with 'all human being living in this world according to the body part covered by it, *mandus* 'take abath' with activity to clean up herself from sin and other dirty behaviour', etc.

CLOSING NOTES

For manifestation of themselves as "fond of playing creature", human beings create various kinds of word play using language, their verbal means of communication. With regard to this activity, they yield various aesthetic verbal works are yielded. This paper can prove that language is able to be created to strengthen anything related with religion in its various aspects, such as God with its characteristics, miracles, powers, teachings, approaching practises, prophets

and their friends, and holidays to celebrate and respect God greatness. In Hindu Dharma teachings, language plays especially are carried out through connecting or associating linguistic elements of various languages either Indonesian, local languages (Javanese, Balinese, and Sundanese) and foreign languages as well, such as Sanskrit, English, Japanese, Portuguese, Arabic, and so on. The play is done in such way since the creators are often not aware if what they have done is actually a syncretism of various cultural elements through languages whose relatedness are diachronically difficult to trace. However the strong ideological purposes those creations must be realized. This paper will hopefully to stimulate other researchers to investigate word plays exist in other bigger religions in Indonesia, such as Islam, Christian, and Catholic.

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