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COLOR NOMENCLATURES IN BALINESE LANGUAGE WITHIN LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Balinese language has some unique color nomenclatures. How those colors are categorized into different nomenclatures becomes the first concern of this study. Then, why those nomenclatures are linguistically unique and exist culturally in different ways is the second question. NSM (Natural Semantic Metalanguage) is used both in theory and method. Since some Balinese terms are inexplicable through semantic primes of the NSM, linguistic relativity theory is used to dig descriptive meanings and concepts of those color nomenclatures in Balinese cultural linguistic realm. The study finds that there are four color nomenclatures in Balinese language, and those nomenclatures are different mainly because of religious and historical backgrounds.

Keywords: color, Balinese, natural semantic metalanguage.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is still a scarcity of research concerning on how Balinese people classify colors and their significance in the society. Asthararianty et al (2016)ⁱ concern more on the philosophical and religiosity of colors in Balinese rituals and traditions. Meanwhile, Nitiasih (2012)ⁱⁱ focusses on how different colors are closely related to directions, deities, internal bodily organs and natural elements. Those studies are of sublime nature and tend to direct the discussion into metaphysical platform rather than how they are related to social meaning within real interactions. Many other researches do not focus on the significance of colors both in semiotic or semantic. Rather, colors are commonly treated as metaphysical or religious substances if they are to be associated to Balinese culture, and thus they do not reveal how colors contribute to evolution of the culture in a more real sense.

Colors, as a matter of fact, have special slot in Balinese core culture. Whereas other cultures might regard colors as merely visible rays or parts of natural occurrence, the Balinese treat colors in different ways. Colors, according to Balinese way of thought, are not only ranges of different colors derived from prismatic refraction. Rather, they are elementary. It means that colors are derived from natural elements such as earth, sky, blood, clouds, leaves, ocean and wood. They are classified uniquely within criteria that range from history, politics, religious system, knowledge system, directions, folklores, and even human activities. Thus, from analyzing significance of colors, many other elements of Balinese culture could be further revealed.

This study has two main focuses. At first, it presents classifications of colors, or nomenclatures of colors to be specific, that exist in Balinese culture. Jenkins (2015)ⁱⁱⁱ provides some classifications of colors that he obtained from Balinese ceremonies and religion. There are three classifications presented in the study. Its accuracy, however, needs to be developed since it

does not include many other color terms and nomenclatures which actually exist.

Among many previous studies about colors in Balinese people's life, perhaps the most important question is why the color nomenclatures exist in those particular ways for the Balinese. This question leads to explorations to many different perspectives and aspects of Balinese cultures, which connects Balinese linguistic richness and how they came to be.

Why knowledge of color nomenclatures has importance is because it has a lot of contribution to exploring Balinese society. It is particularly useful when somebody wants to bridge intercultural communication and understanding. Since colors have major significance in Balinese society, they determine how people should use them in different activities and purposes. Understanding colors means to understand how they are applied in the society and thus contribute to better respect and tolerance. Moreover, since colors are also tightly related to religious system, art and even specifically music, understanding their nature and principles within their society will be the main contribution to field of linguistic anthropology.

II. REVIEWS OF RELATED LITERATURES

To analyze how colors contribute to Balinese unique cultural elements, two main theories are used in this research. First, the theory of linguistic relativity is used to trace out the color classifications and nomenclatures. This theory is combined with Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) to explain and split the semantic meaning of each color nomenclature as they exist and develop in Balinese way of thought. After finding why a particular nomenclature exists in such a way, the analysis is continued to reveal the background how those nomenclature come into being.

Bogushevskaya (2017)^{iv} conducted research on how modern simplified Chinese

language is lack of the term 'orange'. It is argued that there is no monosyllabic color term for orange in Chinese language despite China's popularity as citrus-producing country.

Formerly, similar research was conducted in Finnish by Uusküla (2008)v, defining nine basic colors known by Finnish people. It is found out that the basic color terms develop because Finland has significant varieties of seasons and vegetations. Furthermore, back in 90s, Davies et al (1994)vi mention that there are four basic colors in Ndebele Bantu language, namely red, black, white and green with blue (grue). The term 'yellow' is introduced to later generations through modern education. Now, almost all Ndebele people know 'yellow' as one of their basic colors.

Basic colors in Balinese language is listed in Nitiasih (2012)vii as representatives of *Dewata Nawa Sanga*, nine deities of the directions in Balinese religious system. Nitiasih uses NSM to analyze the concept of colors in *Dewata Nawa Sanga*. However, the analysis does not show core meaning of the concept since it fails to clarify the semantic meaning down to semantic primitives.

Research on Balinese color nomenclatures is a continuation of previous studies on color terms related to culture, in this case, Balinese. The importance of this research is crucial because Bali is well-known place for its cultural uniqueness.

Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) has become grand theory of many linguistic researches after its popularity in 1960s. The NSM approach in linguistics have also influenced linguistic research in Indonesia, as well as in Bali. In fact, however, the scope of NSM analysis in Balinese language is still limited to verbs and nouns probably due to lack of interest in this subject matter. Balinese language actually has a lot of special adjectives to be explicated by using NSM.

Mulyadi and Siregar (2006)viii analyzed some Indonesian verbs by

utilizing NSM, and they found out several interesting variants of a certain core verbs in Indonesian language. The variations are caused by differences in intensity or conducts.

A more recent study is conducted by Subianto (2011)ix on Javanese language. He focusses on semantic structures of event process verbs (EPV) in Javanese language. The NSM method is used to trace the core semantic meaning of several EPVs in Javanese language.

Parwati (2018)x applies the same method of NSM in Balinese language as previously conducted by Subianto in Javanese language. Her objects of analysis are variants of the verb 'to cook', because apparently Balinese people has several terms synonymous to it.

Studies involving NSM as a theory and method of semantic analysis in Balinese language have recently reached verbs and nouns as main discussions. However, there is still a lot of aspects in Balinese language which need to be explained and explicated, both semantically and culturally. This research starts with NSM of Balinese color terms, which are adjectives, and thus attempts to add the research roadmap on NSM applied in Balinese language.

III. METHODS

As a qualitative study, this research describes linguistic phenomenon on how Balinese people conceptualize colors. A technique called semantic explication (Wierzbicka, 1992)xi is used in some parts to explicate complex terminologies. Also, as suggested by Goddard (2018)xii, a more elaborate technique of Natural Semantic Metalanguage called semantic molecules are used because in color nomenclature there are many difficult terms which need more elaborate descriptions and explications.

At first, the data is analyzed descriptively, conforming names of colors and categorize them into groups based on Balinese cultural perspective. Then, the

description continues to deeper ethnographic analysis regarding why those nomenclatures exist in Balinese society and why they are not interchangeable. This interesting part involves investigations of historical background, political situation, social class, and religious system of the Balinese. To explain why nomenclatures exist needs a well-blended understanding about those core frames of Balinese cultural substances.

IV. DISCUSSION

To commence categorizing color nomenclatures in Balinese culture, it is necessary to start with the basic colors. Equally important is where the Balinese derive such colors to become an integral part of the whole culture's pattern. The Balinese apparently recognize basic colors from natural objects, particularly spices, natural elements (such as sea, earth, sky and fire), wood and bodily parts. This is what is called as *natural colors* existing without any human interference. Colors derived from spices are *jenar* 'yellow' (from turmeric), *pêtak* 'white' (from *kencur*,—*Kaempferia galanga*), *abang* 'red' (from ginger) and *ireng* 'black' (from galangal tuber). The four kinds of tuber become four basic ingredients (*basa guru*) in Balinese complete spice (*basa gede*).

Other colors are derived from natural colors of things like *red* from blood. The Balinese *abang* or *barak* (red color) is special and recognized differently from other red gradations. This Balinese *barak* color scheme is particularly derived from the color of fresh blood, either of human origin or sacrificed animals. Some mythological stories even mention that Balinese red anointed on some types of *kamben* clothes is extracted from real blood. This, however, has been clarified as untrue.

The Balinese *irêng* 'black' color is derived from charcoal or fireblack, which are typical in Balinese traditional kitchens before oil or gas stove were invented. The Balinese used to cook by firewood, and the

fireblack will be accumulated on the kitchen's wall. This is where natural black color is derived.

To the Balinese, the counterpart of black is *pêtak* 'white', while in other languages such as modern Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia, any colors are claimed not to have antonyms. For the Balinese, only black color has an antonym (which is white), while antonyms for other colors do not exist. Natural white color is derived from *pamor* (lime), from which the Balinese derive the phrase *colek pamor* 'pamor mark'. It is not only that the Balinese derive 'eye-dropper sample' of white from *pamor*, but *pamor* is also considered as the symbol of whiteness, as charcoal as a symbol of blackness and blood as redness's.

4.1 Basic Color Nomenclatures

Tridhatu

The three colors: red, black and white conform the very first and simple Balinese color nomenclature which is called *tridhatu*. Anantawikrama (2017)xiii confirms that *tridhatu* has a lot of philosophical and religious roles. This nomenclature, meaning 'three colors' are not interchangeable. So, if somebody hears *tridhatu*, (s)he has in mind this cultural script:

Tridhatu (and any other color nomenclatures)

>>many people think like this:

Somebody says this because people know this something has to be like this

If this something is not like this, this something is not true.

People feel bad about this if this happens.

The above cultural script is an NSM explication of how Balinese think about color nomenclatures. In the other words, the Balinese are very strict in determining certain colors because those colors have particular significance. Although *tridhatu* means 'three colors', the three colors have

to be red, black, and white. So, when people say *tridhatu*, everyone else will think of the same color constituents.

Poleng

Another basic color nomenclature is *poleng*, or black-white pattern. The Balinese has a more polite term *dwiwarna* to refer to this nomenclature. So, black and white color are antonymous in Balinese language. White and black are the only colors which have counterpart. This antonymous concept of black and white brings forth contrasting features and symbolism attributed to black and white colors. Black color symbolizes darkness, evil, death, sorrow, cycle of birth and death (reincarnation), nothingness, stagnancy, and wrongness. Meanwhile, white color is a symbol of truthfulness, godliness, existence, activeness, happiness, and liberation. Additionally, both white and black also has equally good qualities. The two colors can symbolize '*rwa bhinneda*', or literally, two complementary things contributing to the workings of nature. Positive and negative charges, man and woman, male and female, day and night, hot and cold, and so on are two complementary things necessary for the continuation of the natural activities. So *poleng* tends to mean both contrasting factors and complementary factors of nature.

Poleng

"I Made nganggo saput poleng."

I Made wore poleng cloth.

X is Made

X feels something like this:

I know something can be good because something else is bad.

If something good happens, something bad can happen.

After something bad happens, a good something can happen.

X knows this is true.

The cultural script of how the concept *poleng* is understood in Balinese society shows that the Balinese are aware of non-perpetual existence in the mundane platform. This contributes firmly to the way of thinking of the Balinese. The Balinese do not usually feel sad if their family member pass away, because they think about the non-perpetual existence of anything worldly. Something good can be bad in different situation, and therefore the concept of *desa-kala-patra* 'situational urgency' emerges from the *rwa-bhinneda* concept.

Abang-pêtak

Although red and white are not antonymous in Balinese linguistic concept, they both have unique cultural significance. *Abang* 'red' is the symbol of feminism, derived from the redness of a woman's uterus during menstrual period. For the Balinese, the term *abang* within *abang-pêtak* nomenclature is equally sacred and respected as *pêtak* 'white'. While red means feminism, white refers to the color of male semen. The combination of male and female reproductive secretions will produce new life, new beginning, and new hope. Therefore, *abang-pêtak* is a symbol of unity within difference, as well as a symbol of life, generative power, and authority.

Putih-kuning

Besides equally powerful red and white colors, the Balinese also have 'equally sacred and pure' colors. The *putih-kuning* 'white-yellow' nomenclature has been known for centuries as symbols of unity between two major religious sects: the Saivism and the Buddhism. The nomenclature is actually originated from *Sutasoma* Script, written by Mpu Tantular in the early Majapahit era. In the *Sutasoma*, it is mentioned that the Saiva religion and the Buddha religion are essentially one, worshipping the One Almighty God, and therefore both Saivism and Buddhism have equal status.

Sutasoma Script does not specifically mention the use of white and yellow colors, but apparently the nomenclature emerged in the late Majapahit era until its cultural refuge to Bali at the end of its heydays. In Bali, white-yellow pattern is very common in temple festivals, signifying that the festival is a holy celebration for the deities and any other godly beings accompanying them. So, culturally speaking, *putih-kuning* nomenclature is tightly connected to purity, religiosity and sacredness. Therefore, the status of *putih-kuning* color nomenclature is put higher in Balinese societal and religious patterns. Compared to *poleng* nomenclature, the *putih-kuning* is more to hierarchy of higher, more sublime, or transcendental, existence.

Putih-kuning

X thinks like this:

Something else is good beside something good.

I want good things happen to everyone.

I think like this.

Pancawarna (brumbun)

A more elaborate color nomenclature is *pancawarna* ‘five colors’. Whenever Balinese say *pancawarna*, there will be fixed five colors: red, black, white, yellow and *brumbun*—a combination of those four colors as the fifth one. Sometimes the term *brumbun* is interchangeable to *pancawarna*, but in some cases *brumbun* is a combination of four colors. So, in Balinese linguistic range, *brumbun* is a name of both a color and a combination of four colors.

An example of *brumbun* as one color is the one found in *pancawarna* nomenclature. It becomes the fifth color, but this fifth color is a combination of four former colors. Therefore, the exact definition of the fifth color cannot be specified or represented by a monochromatic color. In the other words, *brumbun* is still widely undefinable as a single color.

Pancawarna is closely related to religious system in Bali. The five colors represent five directional deities. Nitiasih (2012) confirms that the Balinese associate colors with directions and presiding deities over a particular direction. The four colors are associated with four cardinal directions: black for north, white for east, red for south, and yellow for west. The fifth direction, the *Madhya* ‘middle’ is associated with the blend of the four cardinal colors.

There is no apparent connection between colors of *pancawarna* and *tridhatu* even though *tridhatu* colors are present in *pancawarna* nomenclature. *Pancawarna* is closely related to presiding deities of the cardinal directions, while *tridhatu* colors are related to *Trimurti*, or three deities of creation, maintenance and annihilation of the cosmic existence.

How a Balinese thinks about *pancawarna* in daily life context can be formulated as the following cultural script. The cultural script can only work if a situation is present. So, in the following formulation I inserted a situation in which *pancawarna* is generally used.

Pancawarna

“Nyoman Padmi ngaturan segehan ***pancawarna***.”

Nyoman Padmi offers *five-colored segehan rice offering*.”

Nyoman Padmi is X

X thinks something like this:

Something is above live and die

I can feel something like this because somebody else knows something about it

Many good things happen because something like this is near

I want this to happen

I want more good things everywhere

I do this.

It is to be noted that to explicate complicated terms in Balinese independently, semantic primes are not

sufficient to accommodate core meanings. Rather, as suggested by Goddard (2018)xiv, semantic molecules must be applied to formulate core meanings for more complicated cultural terminologies. This research does not focus on the use of semantic molecules, and therefore further NSM research on Balinese cultural terms and their core meanings can be later conducted.

Nawasanga

When every two colors of a *pancawarna* nomenclature is combined, there will emerge four derivative colors. The Balinese name these colors the *anudisaya* nomenclature, or ‘colors of sub-cardinal directions’. In the northeast, black (north) combines with white (east) to be *klawu* ‘grey’. So *klawu* belongs to *anudisaya* color nomenclature. In the southeast, meanwhile, red (south) and white (east) combines as *dadu* ‘pink’. The presence of *dadu* ‘pink’ in Balinese color terminology is unique because many traditional cultures tend to include pink in the same category as red. This is an evidence that Balinese people have more variations of red color scheme and have at least two specific words for its intensity, the *barak* and *dadu*. From this fact it can be concluded that red is the most widely known color in Balinese traditional culture.

In the southwest, red (south) meets yellow (west) to become *jingga* ‘orange’. In fact, to find orange color in Balinese customary rites and activities is rather difficult since it is not a color commonly produced by natural ingredients as a basic one. Therefore, to Balinese in general, the *jingga* (or *kudrang*, in some places) color is a rare case, specified rarely as *gêdang nasak* ‘ripen papaya’ color^{xv}. This, however, proves that Balinese traditional people have profound knowledge of color mixtures, indicating that Balinese language have sufficient vocabulary for some basic natural and compound colors.

Yellow (west) and black (north) combines in the northwest as *wilis* ‘green’.

Wilis is not a foreign terminology for the Balinese, since this color is widely seen in Balinese culinary and ritual ingredients.

It is to be noted that the Balinese have a thought that green is a combination of yellow and black, a contrast to Western nomenclature that green is a compound of yellow and blue. Whether what is meant by ‘black’ by the Balinese is actually blue still needs to be further explored. As a reference, however, the traditional Balinese do not include blue color in any terminologies. Blue color seems to be ‘out of category’ despite its abundant presence in seas and the sky. One of the cases about the scarcity of blue in Balinese culture is probably because the traditional Balinese do not have suitable natural ingredients to produce blue color. The existence of blue color is found in *Kamasan* paintings, started from the eighteenth century. The basic ingredient for blue color is obtained from a blue shell which used to grow at the sea bottom of Benoa bay, near Sakenan.

How blue color is altered by and considered to be black indicates that the Balinese have the same cultural properties for both blue and black. One evidence of this is found in flowers. The Balinese use the term *beru*, or *biru* for blue flowers, more commonly lotuses and water lilies. The color term *tangi* ‘purple’ is used in relation to flowers. The blue or purple-colored flowers, as the purple *pacah tangi* flower (*Impatiens balsamina*) and *têlêng* flower (*Clitoria ternatea*) are considered black flowers when they are related to rituals. In the other words, blue or purple-colored flowers are considered representative, or synonymous to, black, and thus used to worship presiding deity of the northern direction.

Other colors

As how blue color has unique status in Balinese color nomenclatures, some other colors do have similar case. Blue and purple (including violet) is considered as synonymous to black in ritual-related discourse area. Even though modern

Balinese younger generation can now easily differentiate between blue, purple and black, the discourse area seems to be unchanged.

Similar case happens also to *sokêlat* ‘brown’. The brown color is considered the color of dry blood. Therefore, brown is another derivative of red in Balinese color nomenclature. Brown is also the color of wood, but its uses for wooden material is limited because the Balinese also have more complex color references in association to woods. Further studies about how the Balinese see colors in types of woods will be interesting and valuable research topics.

4.2 Color Gradation

The Balinese language also provides interesting vocabulary for color gradation. Some colors that happen to be gradable are black, white, red and yellow. Four of them are the basic *pancawarna* colors. There are some terminologies of color gradations as the following table.

Basic color	Intensified gradation	Tinged gradation
<i>sêlem</i> ‘black’	<i>sêlêm dêtdêt</i> ‘deep black’	<i>badêng sêngêd</i> ‘intense dark-brown, sun-tanned’ (complexion).
<i>putih</i> ‘white’	<i>putih nyêntag</i> ‘light white’	<i>putih susu</i> ‘milky white’
<i>barak</i> ‘red’	<i>barak ngêndih</i> ‘bright (bloody) red’	<i>barak api</i> ‘fiery red’
<i>kuning</i> ‘yellow’	-	<i>kuning gading</i> ‘whitish yellow’ <i>nyandat gading</i>

		‘greenish yellow’ (for complexion)
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Interestingly, the color gradations are special and fixed, so if *barak ngêndih* exists, it cannot be applied to blue as *pêlung ngêndih* ‘bright blue’ or any other colors. The Balinese commonly use *nguda* ‘young’ to express lighter colors, and *tua* ‘old, dark’ to represent darker gradations. The table above contains only apparent gradations with specified names, indicating more frequent uses and encounters in daily life.

V. Conclusion

The color nomenclatures in the Balinese language is complex compared to color terms in some other parts of the world. This indicates that for centuries, Balinese culture has been acculturated to other cultures, which resulted in its own enrichment in complexity of vocabulary. The color nomenclatures of the Balinese, which are lack of blue color but rich in red, is an indication that red is significantly more apparent in Balinese culture than blue. Other factors are because ingredients for red colors are easier to obtain than those for blue.

Color nomenclatures in Balinese language are complex because of many factors. The leading factors are religious-semiotic and historical backgrounds. The Balinese consider colors to be related tightly to directions and their presiding deities, and thus some colors are grouped into fixed nomenclature which are special and uniquely meaningful one another.

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