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Shifting Speech Levels: Exploring Balinese Women's Language in Inter-Caste Marriage Communication Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This study aim is to engage with and make sense of Balinese women's language based on a case study that drew on the narratives of two Balinese women with different social class backgrounds. Inter- caste communication requires different speech levels between interlocutors; thus, this study has two main objectives. Firstly, to explore how life events occurred during inter- caste marriages and how they affected these two women set their speech levels. Secondly, to examine the identity constructed through their speech levels. To do so, this author employed ethnographic research, narrative analysis, and sociolinguistics theory. The author obtained meaningful stories narrated by the two women through in- depth interviews. The results revealed that these Balinese women constantly shifted their speech levels in inter- caste marriage communication contexts. This shifting of speech levels was also related to the presenting or negotiating identity construction for these Balinese women.

Keywords: identity, gender, speech levels, sociolinguistics, women's language

1. Introduction

A common simplifying stereotype is that women speak a different language than men. Over the past few decades, sociolinguistics research found that women's language reflected their position as marginalised and powerless compared to men (Lakoff, 1973: 48). Women tended to speak conventionally and moderately while men were freer to use various language expressions (Labov, 1990: 206). Women are also not allowed to express or boast about themselves than men (Tannen, 1991: 19). Their spoken language is seen as inferior and inadequate because women are in a submissive position to men (Spender, 1998: 10). Also, women and men speak different varieties of the same language as each gender play a different social role and demonstrate specific behaviour and, subsequently, this behaviour leads to identity construction (Trudgill, 2000:

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79–80). Meanwhile, Saussure (2011: 15) conceived of a uniquely different style of individual language as *parole* rather than a general language system of *langue*. In brief, sociolinguistics views different styles of language as a reflection of different statuses or social structures.

Like other Southeast Asia peoples, Bali social relations embedded by patriarchy and social stratifications (Ottino, 2006: 25). Bali's kin group status consists of two main groups: *triwangsa* (three nobilities) and *jaba* (outsiders). Descendants of *triwangsa* consist of a *brahmana* (priest), *ksatria* (knight), and *wesya* (merchant or middle) social classes; while *jaba* refers to *sudra* (commoners) such as people from the Warga Pasek, Warga Bhujangga, Warga Bendesa and other clans. However, it is also accurate to say that caste-based social structure has changed in modern life practices (Putra, 2011: 149). However, it is still very present in Bali Hindu customary or ritual contexts in that a *brahmana* priest is still considered higher than a priest from a *jaba* group. Such a difference subsequently determines the speech levels used, meaning whether one speaks in *halus* (refined) or *madya* (middle) or *kasar* (low) Balinese. People with *jaba* status address *brahmana* with refined or higher speech, while that is not necessarily when *brahmana* speaks to *jaba*.

In a society that stems from patriarchal culture, language level is even more complicated due to differences in status based on gender. For instance, in an inter-caste marriage, a Balinese woman is unfavourable, especially a *jaba* woman who marries a *triwangsa* man. Her status changes from that of her birth family but is not equivalent to her husband's status. It is apparent as she expected to speak in high Balinese to her *triwangsa* husband and his family members.

Thus, this study's general aim is to engage with and make sense of Balinese women's language based on a case study that drew on the narratives of two Balinese women with different social class backgrounds. Specifically, it has two main objectives. Firstly, to explore how life events occurred during their inter-caste marriages and how these events affected how these two women set their speech levels. Secondly, to examine the identity constructed through their speech levels. Few articles in the field of linguistics have scrutinised this issue. Hence, this study sought to contribute to sociolinguistic studies on women's language viewed from the complicated hierarchical or caste-based social background in Bali's specific context.

2. Literature Review

There has been a growing interest in the study of women's lives in the context of Balinese culture. Researchers have looked at various aspects, public perceptions, and Balinese patriarchal society. For example, articles on Balinese

women have focused on social and psychological aspects such as the effects of widowhood on their lives economically, socially, and culturally (Putra and Creese, 2016), women's tendency to choose involvement in the domestic sphere rather than the public sphere (Gelgel, 2016), domestic violence and its horrendous impacts on women's psychology (Raka, Yasa and Suyatna, 2020) and negative verbal expressions in congratulation messages for new-born baby girls (Sartini, 2020).

Putra and Creese (2016: 119–20) examined how widowhood status carries a stigma that harmed women in economic, social, and cultural aspects. They found that widows and divorcees can overcome this situation if their economic strength increased, which could lift their social and cultural status in society. Their case studies on the suffering of Balinese widows touched on caste differences in inter-caste marriage and discussed the status of widowed women and their children. In one example, a widowed woman with her two daughters returned to her parent's *jaba* household after her *triwangsa* husband assassination in 1965 killings of left-wing followers and sympathisers. While Putra and Creese's study is engaging in terms of the children's social status of an inter-caste marriage, it did not discuss language.

Gelgel (2016: 208–9) discovered that Balinese women preferred to be involved in the domestic sphere rather than the public sphere and viewed domestic life as women's nature. However, in this study, Gelgel also did not analyse the issue of language. Raka, Yasa, and Suyatna (2020: 299–300) explained that domestic violence resulted from male hegemony and caused psychological trauma for Balinese women. However, the authors did not specifically examine verbal expressions in domestic violence. Sartini (2020: 414) found that negative verbal expressions and expectations related to domestic matters mostly appeared in congratulation messages for new-born baby girls. Sartini's study analysed the language. However, the primary focus was not on the context of inter-caste marriage.

Gender inequality is also evident in an inter-caste marriage (Putra 2011: 33). A Balinese woman will experience one of two situations; being elevated to an honorific title such as *Jero* after marrying a *triwangsa* man or being *nyerod* (de-casted) after marrying a *jaba* man. However, in a patriarchal society, Balinese men are privileged and are not elevated or de-casted due to inter-caste marriage meanwhile only Balinese women are required to adapt to new social roles, which obliges them to adjust their speech levels in the Balinese language.

These previous studies have made significant contributions to the field, yet limited attention has been given to women's language and specifically for those who have undergone inter-caste marriage in the Balinese context. Thus, this study hopes enhancing sociolinguistics regarding the shifting speech levels

and the negotiating of identity construction.

3. Research Method and Theory

3.1 Research Method

This study drew from a qualitative study in which data collected was in verbal texts expressed by the interviewees. During an oral interview, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 31) suggested, the author must be a ‘good listener’ to the interviewee’s story yet aware that by arranging the questions the researcher ‘remains in control of what information produced’. Georgakopoulou (2006: 235–36) noted that a ‘life story mostly takes the form of a reflexive and representative account of self’ or a ‘short-range narrative that gives an account of a certain landmark or key event or experience that considered to be pivotal in the formation of the interviewee’s sense of self’. Narrative research has widely used in social research and popular discourse, yet, the word ‘narrative’ itself is highly diverse in the way it is understood (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou, 2008: 2). Wertz et al. (2011: 224) mentioned that ‘the stories that people tell about their lives represent their meaning-making’ and how they connect with an experience, thus, how they select and narrate the story is a way to understand their life.

In this case study, the interviewees were two Balinese women, purposively selected because they experienced social status changes caused by inter-caste marriage. The first interviewee was a housewife with a *jaba* background who married a *triwangsa* man in 1991. The second interviewee was an entrepreneur, born and raised as a *triwangsa*, married a *jaba* man in 2013, got divorced, and later married a *triwangsa* man in 2018. These Balinese women faced challenges speaking different speech levels with their birth family and their husbands’ families, eventually constructing their identities. Throughout the study, this author has protected the interviewees’ identity by using Amba and Sinta as pseudonyms.

The author conducted in-depth interviews to obtain stories narrated by the two women related to speech levels and their sense of identity. Both interviewees gave their written consent before carrying out the interviews. The questions focused on the speech levels spoken before and after their inter-caste marriages. This author tried to minimise her reactions to not interfere with the interviewees’ speaking about their lives or events. The author firstly interviewed Amba on 20 September 2020 and the second interviewed Sinta on 27 September 2020. These interviews lasted for twenty to thirty minutes at their respective places, and in the languages that the interviewees spoke most conveniently, namely, in the Balinese and Indonesian languages. Therefore,

the transcripts include some terms from the Balinese language—subsequently, the author translation into English attempted to maintain the authenticity of their utterances. Field notes were taken during the sessions to help sort out the narratives' complexity and better understand the interviewees' stories.

The author followed transcription of recorded interviews and conducted a narrative analysis of the material to recount and made sense of each event as told by each interviewee. These transcripts and analysis were given to the two interviewees for comments and feedback to ensure the findings' trustworthiness and verify this author's interpretation of their stories.

3.2 Theory

3.2.1 Language and Society

The language of a community group reflects not only the mind; it also how the speakers see and construct the world's reality. In sociolinguistics, as a branch of linguistics that focuses on the relationship between language and society, language is not only seen as a device to convey information but also as a form of self-expression that reflects an individual's motives, emotions, desires, knowledge, attitudes, and values (Apte, 2001: 41). Besides, language patterns include 'independent variables such as sex, class or age' (Coupland, 2001: 18). Sociolinguists also look at language features and correlations with social devices. The kinship system is seen as a general feature of a language because kinship is a significant aspect of a social system and includes gender, age, generation, bloodline, and marriage (Wardhaugh, 2006: 229).

Sociolinguistics also highlights the relationship of language to hierarchies within a society, such as social classes. 'Language behaviours of members of different social groups ... reflect differences in social roles and statuses, and access to and control the means of production' (Omoniyi, 2006: 15).

3.2.2 Language and Gender

Women's language has been a study area for many researchers with interest in language and gender theory. Women's language frequently seen as powerless, emotional, minutiate, and has lower contributions to a conversation (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 176–77). Politeness is also one of the pivotal elements which, according to Holmes (2004: 88–90), can be classified into three types: the degree of formality as in the use of honorific titles; deference behaviour such as in the use of euphemism; and camaraderie between speakers as in a conversation between friends.

Below are the distinctions between feminine and masculine interactional style in Diagram 1. as put forth by Holmes (2006: 6).

Feminine	Masculine
Facilitative	Competitive
Supporting Feedback	Aggressive Interruptions
Conciliatory	Confrontational
Indirect	Direct
Collaborative	Autonomous
Minor Contribution (in Public)	Dominates (Public) Talking Time
Person/Process Oriented	Task/Outcome Oriented
Affectively Oriented	Referential Oriented

Diag. 1. Feminine and Masculine Interactional Style. *Source*: Holmes, 2006: 6.

3.2.3 Language and Identity

Identity has been the central focus of many research fields, including sociolinguistics (Mahboob, Djenar and Cruickshank, 2015: 20), and it is a complex and multi-layered aspect of an individual. As Bucholtz (2011: 1–2) put forth, three points to consider are that individuals ‘negotiate and navigate’ identity categories ‘in a variety of ways within social interaction’, ‘identities are the result of social practice and social interaction’, and ‘no single aspect of identity is independent of other aspects’.

In examining the fluidity of identity, Otsuji (2010: 189) posited that it would be erroneous to identify an individual based on belonging to one cultural background and origin especially for immigrants born and raised in a different country. On language and ethnic identity, Fought (2006: 21–23) suggested connections can be observed such as a heritage language, code-switching, specific linguistic, supra-segmental, and discourse features; and borrowed language variety along with factors of age, gender, and social classes.

4. Results and Discussion

Inter-caste marriage in the Balinese context involves complexities in practices that might cause uneasiness for the people involved, especially women or a bride. As described by Putra (2011: 152), two types of inter-caste marriage have different status consequences. One, termed hypergamy, is a marriage between a woman from a lower social class and a high-caste man in which her status is elevated but is not equivalent to her husband’s status. Besides, termed hypogamy, is a marriage between a high-caste woman and a man from a lower social class that de-casted her social status and disownment by her family. In either case, the status change is a serious issue and impacts the speech levels used. Although the bride’s status elevated in hypergamy, she is still considered ‘second class’ and required to address her husband’s family members in refined Balinese. Although the bride is de-casted in hypogamy, other people are still required to address her in refined Balinese, while she does not need to do so

toward her interlocutor.

The two Balinese women's narratives from this case study include experiences before and after their inter-caste marriage (see Photo. 1 and 2). Besides, challenges they underwent when speaking in different social realms, the treatment each received from their birth family and marital family affected how these two women set their speech levels, and the identity that each one constructed as a Balinese woman.



Photo. 1. A Balinese woman and her birth family during an engagement ceremony (Source: author's file)



Photo. 2. A Balinese bride and groom during a wedding ceremony (Source: author's file).

4.1 *Amba's Story: Everything Has Changed*

Amba was nineteen years old when she entered into an inter-caste marriage with a *triwangsa* man. Born and raised in a *jaba* family, she initially had very little knowledge and experience to speak in high speech. The situation became more complicated because Amba lived in a society of mostly people from *jaba* backgrounds. Consequently, during Amba's childhood, she barely spoke high speech due to lack of exposure. When Amba met her *triwangsa* fiancé, she tried to speak some high speech words. However, when she met a senior member of her fiancé's family, she began to worry about not communicating accordingly.

Amba eventually got married, was elevated from her birth family's social class, and became a *Jero*. From that point onward, Amba's life changed. In her *triwangsa* marital family, Amba spoke in a high speech to all family members. However, they replied to her in mixed speech or even low speech. Amba only spoke in low speech with her birth family. They replied to her in high speech.

Eventually, Amba became a senior member of the *triwangsa* family and spoke high speech fluently. In contrast to her newlywed experiences, she allowed the younger family members to speak in the Indonesian language if they did not speak the Balinese language. Amba spoke in a high speech to all of her daughters-in-law regardless of their previous social stratification.

4.1.1 Amba's Speaking Experiences Before and After Marriage

Previously, Amba was a *jaba* with limited experience in socialising with *triwangsa*. At her young age, she was less familiar with the high Balinese language. Amba learned to speak in a few high speech words when she met her fiancé, who came from *triwangsa*. Amba aimed to demonstrate courtesy and decorum to her fiancé, considering his higher social status, by speaking in a mixed speech. Before the wedding, Amba felt comfortable speaking in mixed speech with her fiancé's younger siblings, and they seemed to be fine with her speech. However, Amba was concerned and felt ashamed to communicate with senior members of her fiancé's family because of her inability to speak in high speech adequately. In narrating her story, she said:

I wanted to be polite and decent to him [my fiancé] because I was *jaba* and he was *triwangsa*. My lack of knowledge [of high speech] made me only able to speak a few words to improve the speech produced by my common tongue. So, I replaced 'cang' with 'tyang' (I), 'ento' with 'nika' (that), and 'nah' with 'nggih' (all right). Other than those words, I was still speaking in a low speech to him. Slipping in a little bit of 'tyang – nika' my utterances sounded a little bit better and seemed appropriate enough.

Amba was the first *jaba* to become a *Jero* in her fiancé's *triwangsa* family. She explained how, soon after the wedding, she realised some aspects of her life altered.

I was the first *jaba* ever to join this family. They [my husband's *triwangsa* family members] usually got married to *triwangsa* relatives. I was not the family's relative, and I was a *jaba*. So, I was a double 'outsider'. After my wedding ceremony, my birth family and people around me started to call me 'Jero' instead of my maiden name. The change of name later followed by a change in language use. Like unwritten rules, I had to talk in a high speech to all family members and called them by their respective titles. They would reply to me with their preferred speech levels: either mixed speech or low speech. When I visit my birth family, I prefer to communicate in low speech because I feel comfortable speaking with my own family in this way. Even so, they speak in a high speech to me and have to call me *Jero* all the time.

In her marital nuclear family, Amba's husband allowed her to speak in a mixed speech in their household. She also did not have to call her husband and the children by their respective titles. Subsequently, Amba was freer to express herself in a private family setting. She spoke about her situation as a wife and a

mother in private and public settings.

My husband said it is fine for him [that I speak in a mixed speech level]. He is not rigid, and he never complains about the speech from the very beginning. But, when I was at an event with his family, I would pay attention to speech levels again, keeping the courtesy and my husband's face in front of his extended family and social circle. My children will do the same thing, just like what I do. It is as if they know automatically what speech levels to use depending on the situation. They know when to speak in a mixed speech with their 'Aji' (father) and when to speak in a high speech, especially with their father's family. They [the children] prefer to speak in a low speech when they were with my birth family as if they were part of them. But, of course, my birth family always reply to us in high speech.

It was nearly thirty years after entering the inter-caste marriage world that Amba held a position of responsibility as a senior member in her husband's *triwangsa* family and had adequate proficiency in high speech. As a housewife, her social connections and interactions mostly occurred during family events, religious ceremonies, and social gatherings. She also witnessed and welcomed more *jaba* women who had been given the title of *Jero* as daughters-in-law in her husband's extended family. Amba spoke about being less authoritative in her interactions with these young *Jero* than the treatment that she had initially received.

My proficiency in high speech is equivalent to my husband's family members now. I often lead family events, religious ceremonies, and social gatherings with my speaking skills. Even so, the younger generation such as my daughters-in-law, grandsons, and granddaughters prefer to speak the Indonesian language. Some of them [daughters-in-law] are more comfortable calling me 'Ibu' or 'Bunda' [mother in the Indonesian language] rather than my title. I do not mind it. Some of the daughters-in-law also speak the Balinese language in high speech. I reply to them in high speech, whether their backgrounds were *jaba* or *triwangsa*. I do not want somebody to feel excluded. It is entirely different from my days in the past when I first came here.

4.1.2 Amba's Shifting Identities

Amba was a *jaba* who involved in an inter-caste marriage for nearly thirty years. The marriage marked her as the first *Jero* in a *triwangsa* family that had never previously accepted a *jaba* as a family member. Living a life of a *jaba* in her childhood, she had tiny opportunity and experience to speak in high speech. Amba began to speak in a mixed speech to her *triwangsa* fiancé as a form of courtesy and politeness. Although she began to receive exposure to high speech, Amba's identity was a *jaba*. This identity made Amba felt she was responsible for demonstrating politeness and decorum because her fiancé came from a higher class in the Balinese social system. Consequently, Amba's identity as a *jaba* had less power than her *triwangsa* fiancé's position.

Amba's identity as *Jero* was more complicated than her identity as a *jaba*. She made constant shifting in her speech levels when she identified as *Jero*. This shifting occurred in four settings: with her husband's family, her birth family, her marital nuclear family, and with the younger generation in the *triwangsa* family. Amba spoke in high speech with her husband's family and addressed all by their respective titles, while they replied to her either in mixed speech or low speech. It indicated that Amba's identity as *Jero* had less power than the *triwangsa* family members. Amba spoke in a low speech with her birth family, while they replied to her in high speech and addressed her by her title. It revealed that Amba's identity as *Jero* had more power within the *jaba* family.

In her marital nuclear family, the shifting was more complex, and Amba's identity as *Jero* often overshadowed her identity as a wife and a mother. As a wife and a mother, Amba was able to speak in a mixed speech with her marital nuclear family only in a private setting. When she was in a public setting, she regained her identity as *Jero* and shifted her speech levels into a high speech. It suggested that in a private setting, Amba's identity as a wife and a mother had the power to negotiate with her husband and her children's higher social status. Amba's identity in a public setting as *Jero* had less power than her husband and her children. Amba's identity as *Jero* did not dominate her identity as a senior member of the family. She spoke with the younger generation in both the Indonesian and high Balinese languages. It showed that although Amba's identity as a senior member of the family had power, she attempted to gain mutual respect from the younger generation.

4.2 Sinta's Story: I Only Need Some Adjustments

Sinta was born and raised in a *triwangsa* family, married and divorced from a *jaba* husband, and later married again with a *triwangsa* man. At the age of seventeen, Sinta, a rebellious teenager, decided to live outside her birth family and mingled with a diverse society rather than solely within the confines of *triwangsa*. She preferred to use the Indonesian language to communicate with the people she met outside of her birth family. Sinta recounted her inter-caste marriage experiences with a *jaba* man albeit as a divorcee since five years ago. In the early stage of their relationship, Sinta knew the risks that she would face by marrying a *jaba*: losing her title, being forbidden to speak to her *triwangsa* birth family and relatives carelessly, and relatives threatening to not accept her back into her birth home if she became a widow or divorcee.

Initially, Sinta was not concerned about the social consequences that arose from her inter-caste marriage. In her view, Sinta thought she only needed to make some adjustments in her life. Eventually, she indeed returned to her birth family as a divorcee and later married a second time. These experiences made Sinta

shifting between her rejection of her *triwangsa* identity and her varied identities as a *jaba* wife, a divorcee, a single mother, and lastly, her current identity as the wife of a *triwangsa* man. Sinta's rejection of her *triwangsa* identity shown by her decision to live outside the *triwangsa* social circle and her preference to speak the Indonesian language. Sinta's identity as a *jaba* revealed by her willingness to speak in a high speech to her birth family and address them by their respective titles and her ability to speak in low speech. Even though to some extent, these low speech words were disturbing for her.

As a divorcee, Sinta's identity displayed her continuity in speaking in high speech levels to her birth family and addressing them by their respective titles. Sinta's identity as a single mother highlighted by her attempt to teach her child some words in high speech because she expected the child to communicate accordingly with Sinta and her *triwangsa* family. Lastly, Sinta re-identified herself by letting go of her earlier rejection of her *triwangsa* identity and becoming a *triwangsa* man's wife.

4.2.1 Sinta's Speaking Experiences Before and After Marriage

Sinta mentioned that she was a rebellious teenager who continuously lived far away from her birth family. She also stated that she did not favour social stratification matters since childhood and wished that she had never been born in a society that claimed this status as a person's value. Sinta further believed many social stratification practices misinterpretation from its original philosophy. For example, titles were supposedly given based on a person's occupation, not on the bloodline. However, she continued to follow her mother's advice to adjust her speech levels, especially after she married a *jaba* man. Sinta spoke in a high speech with her birth family and *triwangsa* relatives and addressed them by their respective titles. She narrated some of her experiences.

I was born in a *triwangsa* family. As a teenager, I moved out and mingled with many people from various ethnicities and backgrounds. I prefer to speak in the Indonesian language. In my nuclear family [my birth family], I speak in mixed speech. When I got married to my former husband, I was considered 'nyerod' [de-casted] and became a *jaba*. My mother asked me to speak in high Balinese to them, especially in front of the extended family because I was a *jaba*. Even though I did not have that much concern about social stratification, I followed my mother's advice. I also called them by their respective titles, and they were no longer calling me by my title. I did not mind doing that.

In the *jaba* family of her former husband, Sinta was able to adapt to her new environment very well and rarely met with any obstacles in that process. As a woman with *triwangsa* background, Sinta did not receive special treatment by his family and the *jaba* society where they lived. Sinta's life in domestic and

public settings proceeded as usual event although no one in his family had ever married a person from a higher social status. Consequently, they treated Sinta just as they treated other *jaba* family members. It included the speech levels used in daily conversations. Sinta mentioned that she felt uneasy speaking some low speech, which she considered harsh although she spoke low speech at that time.

My former husband and his family spoke in low speech. My former husband did not speak in a high speech at all. He barely even used a mixed speech except for the word 'nggih' (all right) when he communicated with my birth family. I started speaking low speech immediately. Like, for example, I used 'medahar' instead of 'ngajeng' (eat). I just tried to adjust myself here. Some words in the low speech that I found to be overly harsh, and I was reluctant to utter. I never spoke using any of those harsh words. I did not oppose it because that was how they usually communicated to one another.

After her divorce, when Sinta returned to her birth home, her *triwangsa* family was quite worried about the change in her speech levels. Sinta underwent a short period of transition from speaking in low speech daily to high speech. However, as a divorcee, in her birth family's household, Sinta was still required to maintain her *jaba* mannerisms, especially in speaking. Sinta also described her experiences, maintaining communication with her only child under her former husband's supervision.

When I returned to my [birth] family, I was still considered a *jaba*. So, maintaining mannerisms in speaking was a must. My birth family and extended family replied to me in *madya* speech. To the little one, I speak in many languages. The child speaks in a low speech as the language acquired from the father's family side. I also encourage and teach my child to use high speech to speak appropriately to the grandparents [my parents]. I also speak in the Indonesian language because my child is going to enter school soon.

Sinta then talked about her second marriage. However, this time to a *triwangsa* man and adapting to her new family life after three years of living as a divorcee.

My current husband had been living abroad for ten years. Similar to me, I could say that social stratification is not his cup of tea too. The Indonesian language is my primary language to communicate with my current husband and my in-laws. I met many sisters-in-law that came from *jaba* background and became *Jero*. My husband's family and extended family are moderate compared to mine. Besides the freedom to speak in the Indonesian language, they allow their *Jero* to pray in their family's ancestor temple, and even their husbands are allowed to participate. This family considered me as *triwangsa*, and I was not given the title as *Jero* even though I had been married previously to a *jaba*. When I got married again to a *triwangsa* man, his family did not demand me to speak in high speech, and I also was not obliged to call every member of my birth family by their respective titles anymore.

4.2.2 Sinta's Shifting Identity

Sinta was born and raised in a *triwangsa* household. Sinta had a different perspective about social stratification from early on and began to live outside that social circle. Sinta's moving away from her birth family and living independently in a different place played pivotal roles in her identity construction. She rejected her identity as a member of upper-class society, yet, she did not consider herself a *jaba*. Instead, Sinta preferred a neutral identity as neither *triwangsa* nor a *jaba*. She spoke in the Indonesian language to conceal her *triwangsa* status. Sinta did not gain power by this neutral identity. However, she attempted to gain equality with other people.

Nevertheless, Sinta could not completely omit social status from her identity. As soon as she married a *jaba*, the conduct of both her birth family and her new family caused Sinta to adjust herself as a *jaba*. Sinta's identity as a *jaba* was more complicated than her neutral identity. She made shifts in her speech levels when she identified as a *jaba*. It occurred in three situations: with her birth family, her former husband's family, and then as a divorcee returning to her birth family.

When Sinta identified herself as a *jaba*, she spoke in high speech with her birth family and addressed all family members by their respective titles, while they replied to her in *madya* speech and did not call her by her title. Unlike the experience of Amba, who gained a higher social status but remained subordinate in her *triwangsa* family, Sinta underwent a lowering of social status however her *triwangsa* birth family never spoke to her in low speech. It indicated that Sinta remained privileged as a *triwangsa* father's daughter even if her identity as a *jaba* by marriage had less power in her birth family.

As a wife in her former husband's *jaba* family, Sinta spoke in a low speech, and they also replied in low speech and did not use her birth class title. Her former husband's family was never concerned about her *triwangsa* background and treated Sinta as if she were *jaba*. Sinta, who initially accepted the situation, later felt uncomfortable with some words in low speech. It indicated that Sinta's *triwangsa* background did not affect her *jaba* family's conduct, and her *jaba* identity had power equal to that of her husband's *jaba* family.

When Sinta divorced and returned to her birth family, she maintained *jaba* mannerisms in speaking and used their *triwangsa* titles while her family replied in *madya* speech levels and did not call her by her title. It suggested that Sinta's identity as a divorcee was considered similar to *jaba* and remained subordinate in her birth family. As a single mother, Sinta attempted to teach her child some words in high speech because she expected the child to communicate appropriately with her *triwangsa* family. Sinta's identity as a single mother was complicated because she negotiated her dual identity as a divorcee mother of a

jaba child while expecting the child to communicate with her upper-class birth family.

In her second marriage, Sinta primarily uses the Indonesian language with her triwangsa husband. Consequently, in her birth family, she was not obliged to use high speech or address them by their respective titles. In her marital family, they view Sinta as an upper-class person, and they did not give Sinta the title *Jero*. Subsequently, Sinta is free from maintaining courtesy and decorum and regaining power in her birth family.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

To conclude, three crucial findings discovered from this case study. The first is that the two Balinese women always carried out speech levels shifting from low to mixed to high speech levels depending on their interlocutors' social status, age, and camaraderie. The second is the emergence of two distinct patterns in these Balinese women's speech levels shifting in inter-caste marriage contexts. Lastly, the narratives highlighted that their speech levels shifting reflected their sense of status and identity. However, in the role of a speaker and a responding interlocutor, both women could not conceal their status and identity as it automatically disclosed by the speech levels used.

These findings imply that these women's speech levels shifted in two dilemmatic positions. They wanted to be free to speak the Balinese language as if they were not in an inter-caste marriage. However, they expected to employ appropriate speech levels in the name of tradition. It does not mean that these two women were not in favour of high speech. Instead, they wanted to use high speech to show respect for an interlocutor and did not adhere to their identities as women who married a man from a higher or lower social caste.

This study was limited to a brief analysis of two Balinese women's narratives in the context of inter-caste marriage. Further research with different cases could conduct to improve an understanding of Balinese women's language. It is suggested that in the future, researchers conduct a study that goes beyond the variables of social stratification, age, marital status, and camaraderie. For instance, an investigation could also consider their educational level, occupations, and geographical locations. Also, examine women's language and negotiate identity construction in other patriarchal in a broader scope.

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