

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, focusing on the differences in understanding of *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons between adults and elders. It also outlines the research problems, objectives, significance, scope, and key definitions.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Language plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, particularly within traditional rituals that embody unique linguistic elements. In Bali, rituals are an inseparable part of religious and social life, with each ritual containing specific lexicons that hold deep cultural and spiritual meanings. One such ritual is the *Kepus Pungsed* in Menyali Village, a Balinese Hindu ritual marking the separation of a newborn's umbilical cord. This ritual is conducted as a form of purification and a spiritual introduction of the infant to the universe. Within this ritual, unique lexicons are used by elders and religious leaders to convey symbolic meanings related to the baby's life journey. However, in recent years, the transmission of these lexicons has faced significant challenges.

The endangerment of ritual lexicons is part of a larger phenomenon of language shift occurring in many indigenous communities worldwide. According to Annet (2024), indigenous languages are rapidly disappearing due to globalization, urbanization, and gaps in intergenerational language transmission. In Bali, this issue is evident in the decreasing use of the Balinese language, particularly its refined form (*Basa Alus*), among younger generations. Studies by Suparwa (2008) indicate that many Balinese youth avoid using their native language due to its complexity and fear of misusing it. This avoidance extends beyond everyday conversation and affects the usage of specialized lexicons in rituals, including *Kepus Pungsed*.

Despite the persistence of Balinese rituals, there has been limited empirical data on whether the lexicons within these rituals are still actively understood and used by different generations. Budasi (2020) suggests that although some ritual

lexicons continue to be spoken, their meanings are often not fully comprehended by younger participants. This condition raises concerns about whether these lexicons are actively learned and passed down or merely recited without perceived understanding. Previous research, such as Budasi et al. (2021), has documented the lexicons of Balinese rituals such as Tabuh Rah; however, these studies have not provided concrete data on the extent to which these lexicons are understood across age groups.

The lack of comprehensive studies on intergenerational comprehension has highlighted a critical gap in linguistic research. While it has been established that ritual lexicons are unique and culturally significant, there has been insufficient evidence to determine whether they experience the same level of endangerment as everyday Balinese language. Moreover, no previous study has systematically measured whether a significant difference exists between adults and elders in their perceived understanding of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons. This research addressed that gap by focusing specifically on generational differences in comprehension.

A preliminary observation conducted in Menyali Village indicated that while the Balinese language is still used in daily life and rituals, the specific lexicons associated with rituals such as *Kepus Pungsed* were not equally understood, particularly by the younger adult generation. This observation aligned with previous findings in similar contexts, where lexicons were identified but their level of comprehension remained unmeasured. For example, Budasi et al. (2021) found that 29.58% of the lexicons in the Tabuh Rah ritual were no longer understood by the general public. However, that study did not investigate comprehension differences between age groups, leaving uncertainty about how ritual lexicons are transmitted across generations.

From a theoretical perspective, this study was grounded in the concept of language sustainability and endangerment. According to Tong and Cheung (2011), language and cultural identity are inherently linked, meaning that the decline of ritual lexicons could signify a weakening of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage. When these lexicons are not actively learned and transmitted, the ability

to perform traditional rituals within their authentic linguistic and cultural framework may be compromised.

The urgency of this study was further underscored by the continuing decline of the Balinese language, which parallels the risk of losing the linguistic depth of ritual practices. Ritual lexicons such as those used in the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual represented a highly endangered domain of the Balinese language, as they are context-specific, rarely used in daily interactions, and highly dependent on oral transmission across generations. In the case of *Kepus Pungsed*, when adults demonstrated weaker comprehension compared to elders, this condition signaled a critical stage of endangerment in which younger generations were no longer able to fully access or transmit ritual knowledge.

Documenting and evaluating the current state of ritual lexicons thus became essential to ensure the long-term survival of both linguistic and ritual traditions. This perspective aligns with broader frameworks of linguistic ecology, where endangered lexicons are viewed not merely as words but as repositories of spiritual meaning and cultural values. By examining the degree of perceived understanding of *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons between adults and elders in Menyali Village, this research provided empirical evidence of whether intergenerational erosion was occurring. To achieve this objective, the present study employed a quantitative approach, focusing on measuring comprehension levels to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between these two groups. This method enabled the collection of measurable data that not only identified the current stage of endangerment but also informed strategies for revitalization and cultural preservation.

Furthermore, the selection of Menyali Village as the research site carried strong ethnographic significance. Menyali is widely recognized for its enduring practice of Balinese Hindu rituals and for maintaining a rich repertoire of traditional lexicons, making it an ideal context for investigating endangered ritual language. As noted earlier, endangered lexicons are most vulnerable when intergenerational transmission is disrupted, and Menyali provided a living setting in which both adults and elders continued to participate in ritual practices. This condition made it

possible to observe whether comprehension gaps were emerging between generations and to assess how these gaps might signal the degree of endangerment affecting the ritual language.

Eriani (2025), has documented the lexicons used in the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual and provided important insights into their meanings and cultural functions. However, that study was primarily descriptive and focused on lexical identification, without examining the extent to which these terms were actually understood across different generations. Building upon this foundation, the present research advanced the discussion by systematically measuring the level of comprehension among adults and elders. In doing so, this study not only complemented prior documentation but also directly addressed the crucial issue of intergenerational knowledge transfer, which determines the sustainability of the ritual's linguistic and cultural vitality.

The findings of this research contributed significantly to the documentation and preservation of endangered ritual lexicons in Bali. By providing empirical evidence on comprehension differences between adults and elders, the study served as a foundation for cultural preservation strategies that focus on strengthening intergenerational transmission. This research, therefore, addressed these gaps by employing a quantitative approach to (1) describe adults' perceived understanding of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons, (2) describe elders' perceived understanding of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons, and (3) assess whether a statistically significant difference in perceived understanding existed between the two groups in Menyali Village. By generating empirical data, the study contributed to a deeper perceived understanding of language transmission within ritual contexts and provided meaningful insights into the sustainability of Balinese ritual lexicons.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

The *Kepus Pungsed* ritual is an essential Balinese Hindu ritual that incorporates specific lexicons carrying cultural and spiritual significance. These lexicons function as a medium for transmitting traditional knowledge and ensuring the continuity of ritual practice. However, as globalization and language shift continue to impact local communities, concerns have emerged regarding the extent

to which these lexicons were still understood, particularly among the younger adult generation. Although Balinese remains in use for daily and ritualistic communication, preliminary observations suggested that the lexicons specific to the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual were not fully comprehended by all participants, especially among adults.

Previous research, such as Budasi et al. (2021), has documented the lexicons of other Balinese rituals; however, there has been a lack of empirical data on perceived understanding levels within each generational group as well as across generations. While some studies acknowledge the potential decline of ritual lexicons, they do not provide concrete evidence regarding how well these lexicons were understood by adults, how well they were understood by elders, or whether a significant disparity in perceived understanding existed between the two groups. No prior study had systematically or quantitatively measured the extent to which the *Kepus Pungsed* lexicons were understood by different age groups. The absence of both descriptive and statistical analysis in previous research made it difficult to determine the current status of perceived understanding and to assess the scale of generational gaps that occurred.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Study**

This study was limited to examining the level of perceived understanding of the lexicons used in the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual among adults and elders in Menyali Village. The focus was restricted to measuring and comparing the perceived understanding of selected ritual lexicons in order to determine whether a significant difference existed between the two generational groups. The investigation concentrated exclusively on the ritual language of *Kepus Pungsed* and did not extend to other Balinese ritual types, broader language use, or other sociolinguistic aspects. In addition, this research adopted a quantitative approach and relied solely on numerical data derived from a structured questionnaire. As qualitative methods such as interviews or open-ended responses were not employed, the study did not explore deeper sociocultural explanations or personal perspectives underlying differences in perceived understanding. Furthermore, the data collection in this study was conducted using a questionnaire administered to both adult and elder participants. The questionnaire required respondents to select predetermined

response options to indicate their level of perceived understanding of each lexicon. As a result, participants' responses were limited to fixed choices rather than allowing them to express their perceived understanding in their own words. This format may not fully capture the depth or accuracy of participants' actual comprehension, as it does not assess their ability to explain meanings, use the lexicons in context, or demonstrate active knowledge. Therefore, the findings reflect a measured level of recognition and perceived perceived understanding rather than a comprehensive representation of participants' full linguistic competence.

This research was conducted as a small-scale quantitative study. Although the total population of adults and elders in Menyali Village reached 2,907 individuals, only 100 participants (50 adults and 50 elders) completed the questionnaire. The sample was determined through convenience sampling combined with quota sampling due to limitations in time, accessibility, and participant availability within the given data collection period. Consequently, the sample may not fully represent the entire population of the two generational groups. The reduced number of respondents may limit the generalizability of the findings, and the results should therefore be interpreted within the scope of the selected participants. Future research is recommended to involve a larger sample size to strengthen statistical power and improve representativeness.

From a statistical perspective, assumption testing revealed that the data were not homogeneous; therefore, the Independent Samples t-test could not be applied. Instead, the Mann-Whitney U test was used as a non-parametric alternative to examine differences in perceived understanding between adults and elders. Furthermore, this study did not analyze the etymology, semantic development, phonological structure, or grammatical features of the ritual lexicons, as it focused strictly on measuring current levels of perceived understanding. Given the localized setting and the non-random sampling technique, the results are context-specific and cannot be generalized to other Balinese communities without further research.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

1. What is the level of perceived understanding of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons among adults in Menyali Village?
2. What is the level of perceived understanding of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons among elders in Menyali Village?
3. Is there a significant difference in the perceived understanding of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicon between adults and elders in Menyali Village?

#### **1.5 Purposes of the Study**

1. To describe the perceived understanding of adults toward the lexicons of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual in Menyali Village.
2. To describe the perceived understanding of elders toward the lexicons of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual in Menyali Village.
3. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the perceived understanding of the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual lexicons between adults and elders in Menyali Village.

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

##### **1.6.1 Theoretical Significance**

This research contributed to linguistic studies, particularly in the areas of language maintenance, intergenerational language transmission, and lexicon endangerment. By measuring the extent of knowledge among different age groups, the study provided insights into the sustainability of traditional lexicons in modern society. Additionally, by focusing on the *Kepus Pungsed* ritual, this study enriched the existing literature on Balinese ritual language, which remains underexplored in academic research. The findings served as a reference for future studies on endangered lexicons in Balinese rituals and contributed to broader discussions on language vitality in minority communities.

##### **1.6.2 Practical Significance**

- a. For the Local Community in Menyali Village

By presenting measurable evidence of differences in comprehension, this research helped the local community recognize areas in which language transmission efforts needed to be strengthened.

b. For Educators and Linguists

By providing empirical data on the state of lexicon comprehension, this research offered valuable insights for linguistic scholars and educators in developing strategies to sustain language use in traditional contexts. The study also contributed to the design of language education programs that integrate cultural and ritual elements to promote deeper linguistic and cultural perceived understanding.

c. For Future Researchers

By employing a quantitative approach, this research provided a methodological reference for future studies seeking to assess language comprehension and transmission through statistical data and analysis.

