

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the background of the study, research problems, purposes of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, and definition of key terms. The discussion focuses on the perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Nigang Sasih* ritual among adults and elders in Menyali Village. This chapter also explains the importance of preserving ritual lexicons as part of cultural and linguistic heritage.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity, preserving traditional knowledge, and transmitting social values from one generation to another. Through language, communities are able to sustain their customs, beliefs, rituals, and collective memory across time. Hymes (1974) explains that language must be understood within its cultural and social context because linguistic practices are shaped by the norms, values, and communicative patterns of a speech community. In traditional communities, language does not merely function as a communication tool, but also serves as a cultural symbol that reflects local wisdom and social identity. Similarly, Garner (2015) emphasizes that language develops within the ecological environment of its speakers, meaning that cultural practices and linguistic expressions continuously influence one another. In the Balinese context, ritual lexicons represent an important part of cultural expression because

they are closely connected to religious rituals, sacred practices, and traditional knowledge that continue to exist within Balinese Hindu society.

One of the traditional rituals that contains numerous ritual lexicons is the *Nigang Sasih* ritual practiced in Menyali Village, Buleleng Regency. *Nigang Sasih* is a Balinese Hindu ritual performed for babies at the age of three months according to the Balinese calendar. The ritual is considered important because it symbolizes the purification process and the baby's introduction to social and spiritual life within the community. During the ritual process, various ritual stages, offerings, ritual tools, and sacred practices are represented through specific Balinese lexicons that carry cultural and spiritual meanings. However, the continuity of ritual lexicons is currently facing the threat of endangerment due to modernization, language shift, and declining intergenerational transmission. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) explain that linguistic elements may gradually become endangered when younger generations are no longer actively involved in transmitting and using them within the community. This phenomenon also affects ritual lexicons because many traditional terms are now rarely introduced outside ritual contexts. Ardika (2021) further explains that the preservation of Balinese ritual lexicons is increasingly challenged by social transformation and the declining use of traditional language among younger community members.

Despite the persistence of Balinese rituals within many traditional villages, empirical studies investigating the actual understanding of ritual lexicons across generations remain limited. Previous studies have mostly concentrated on documenting ritual lexicons, analyzing linguistic forms, or describing cultural meanings rather than examining whether community members still understand the

lexicons being preserved. Budasi et al. (2021), for example, documented the lexicons used in the *Tabuh Rah* ritual and identified several ritual lexicons categorized as endangered. However, the study mainly focused on lexical identification and semantic explanation without measuring the degree of understanding among different age groups. As a result, the study did not provide empirical evidence regarding whether younger generations were still familiar with the ritual lexicons documented in the research.

Several other studies have also contributed to the documentation of Balinese ritual lexicons from linguistic and ecolinguistic perspectives. Aridawati (2020) examined the relationship between Balinese ritual language and cultural preservation, emphasizing that ritual lexicons contain philosophical meanings closely connected to Balinese identity. Satyawati (2021) highlighted that traditional Balinese expressions used in rituals reflect social values and local wisdom inherited through generations. Furthermore, Anggayana (2021) explains that ritual lexicons function not only as linguistic elements but also as representations of cultural knowledge and spiritual practices within Balinese society. Although these studies provide valuable contributions regarding the preservation and documentation of ritual language, comprehensive studies investigating the perceived understanding of ritual lexicons among different generations are still limited. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding whether these ritual lexicons continue to be understood actively within the community.

A preliminary observation in Menyali Village indicated a similar condition. Elders generally demonstrated stronger familiarity with ritual lexicons used in the *Ningang Sasih* ritual because they were more actively involved in ritual activities

and traditional practices within the community. In contrast, adults appeared less familiar with the meanings and functions of several ritual lexicons. This condition reflects the possibility of intergenerational differences in ritual lexicon understanding. A similar phenomenon was identified by Budasi et al. (2021), who found that approximately 29.58% of the lexicons documented in the *Tabuh Rah* ritual were categorized as endangered. However, the study did not specifically investigate the extent to which these lexicons were understood across generations. Therefore, further investigation concerning the perceived understanding of ritual lexicons among adults and elders remains necessary.

From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in the concepts of language sustainability and language endangerment. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) explain that linguistic elements may gradually disappear when they are no longer actively transmitted and understood by younger generations. In line with this idea, Garner (2010) emphasizes that language sustainability depends on the interaction between language, culture, and social environment. When ritual lexicons are no longer practiced or learned within the community, these linguistic elements become increasingly vulnerable to extinction. Similarly, Pradhana and Simpen (2021) argue that traditional Balinese lexicons contain philosophical, spiritual, and cultural meanings that represent collective identity and local wisdom. The decline of ritual lexicons may therefore weaken cultural continuity because ritual language carries values, beliefs, and traditional knowledge inherited across generations. Therefore, the preservation of ritual lexicons becomes essential not only for linguistic sustainability but also for maintaining cultural identity and local wisdom.

The urgency of preserving ritual lexicons is strongly connected to cultural safeguarding efforts. UNESCO (2003) explains that intangible cultural heritage includes oral traditions, social practices, rituals, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions transmitted from generation to generation. The sustainability of this heritage depends greatly on active community participation and continuous transmission of cultural knowledge. Language also functions as an important medium for preserving intangible cultural heritage because many traditional practices are inseparable from the linguistic expressions embedded within them. When ritual lexicons are no longer recognized or understood by younger generations, the continuity of the associated cultural practices may also weaken over time. Therefore, efforts to evaluate the current condition of ritual lexicons are necessary to support cultural preservation within Balinese society.

Documenting and evaluating the current state of ritual lexicons thus became essential to ensure that these linguistic and cultural elements remain preserved within the community. By examining the degree of perceived understanding of the *Nigang Sasih* ritual lexicons between adults and elders in Menyali Village, this research provides empirical evidence regarding whether intergenerational erosion is occurring. To achieve this objective, the present study employs a quantitative approach focusing on measuring understanding levels in order to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists between the two groups. Quantitative analysis is considered appropriate because it enables systematic measurement and comparison of perceived understanding between adults and elders using statistical procedures.

The selection of Menyali Village as the research site also carries strong ethnographic significance. Menyali Village remains one of the traditional Balinese communities where Hindu rituals and customary practices continue to be actively maintained within social life. Nevertheless, modernization, educational shifts, and changing patterns of communication may gradually influence the transmission of ritual knowledge among younger generations. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) explain that endangered linguistic elements become increasingly vulnerable when intergenerational transmission weakens within a community. In this context, Menyali Village provides a relevant setting for examining whether the ritual lexicons associated with the *Ningang Sasih* ritual continue to be consistently understood across generations or whether signs of lexical erosion have begun to emerge.

This study also serves as a continuation of previous research conducted by Lestari (2025), which documented the lexicons used in the *Ningang Sasih* ritual and provided important explanations regarding their meanings and cultural functions. The study successfully identified various ritual lexicons related to ritual stages, offerings, ritual objects, and traditional practices within the ritual process. However, Harini's study was primarily descriptive and focused mainly on lexical identification and semantic interpretation. The research did not investigate the extent to which these ritual lexicons were actually understood by different generations within the community. Consequently, empirical evidence regarding intergenerational understanding of the documented lexicons remained unavailable.

Considering these issues, the present study was conducted to investigate the perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Ningang Sasih* ritual

among adults and elders in Menyali Village. This research addresses previous gaps by employing a quantitative approach to (1) describe adults' perceived understanding of the *Ningang Sasih* ritual lexicons, (2) describe elders' perceived understanding of the *Ningang Sasih* ritual lexicons, and (3) assess whether a statistically significant difference in understanding exists between the two groups in Menyali Village. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to studies of language preservation and ecolinguistics, while also contributing practically to efforts aimed at safeguarding Balinese ritual lexicons as part of intangible cultural heritage.

1.2 Problem Identification

The *Ningang Sasih* ritual is one of the essential traditions practiced within Balinese Hindu society, particularly as part of a three-month purification ritual for babies in Bali. This ritual contains numerous ritual lexicons that reflect cultural values, spiritual beliefs, and traditional knowledge inherited across generations. The use of these lexicons is closely connected to the preservation of Balinese cultural identity because each lexical item carries specific meanings and functions within the ritual process. However, changes in social interaction, modernization, and decreasing involvement of younger generations in traditional practices may affect the continuity of ritual lexicon understanding. As a result, some ritual lexicons used in the *Ningang Sasih* ritual are potentially vulnerable to reduced understanding and gradual endangerment among community members.

Previous studies have documented ritual lexicons within Balinese cultural practices. Budasi et al. (2021), for instance, identified and classified endangered lexicons in the *Tabuh Rah* ritual and revealed that a number of ritual lexicons were

no longer widely understood by younger generations. Nevertheless, the study mainly focused on lexical documentation and categorization without examining the degree of understanding among different age groups through empirical statistical analysis. Similarly, Lestari (2025) documented the lexicons used in the *Nigang Sasih* ritual and explained their meanings and cultural functions, yet the study remained descriptive in nature and did not investigate how well these lexicons were understood across generations. Therefore, no prior study has specifically examined the perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Nigang Sasih* ritual between adults and elders in Menyali Village through a quantitative comparative approach.

1.3 Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to the investigation of 36 endangered lexicons used in the *Nigang Sasih* ritual in Menyali Village. The research specifically focused on measuring the current level of perceived understanding among adults and elders toward these ritual lexicons through a structured questionnaire. Therefore, the study did not examine other aspects of the Balinese language, other ritual traditions, or broader linguistic dimensions such as grammatical structure, historical development, or etymological analysis. The primary concern of this research was to identify the extent to which the ritual lexicons are still understood across generations as an indication of intergenerational language transmission.

In terms of methodology, this study employed a quantitative approach using a questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. Since the instrument was designed to measure participants' perceived understanding rather than actual language performance, the findings may not fully represent participants'

comprehensive mastery of the ritual lexicons in authentic ritual contexts. Consequently, the study focused on identifying measurable patterns of understanding rather than evaluating practical linguistic competence or deeper cultural interpretation.

Furthermore, this research was conducted as a small-scale quantitative study involving 100 respondents, consisting of 50 adults and 50 elders in Menyali Village. Although the initial target population was larger, the final analysis was based on valid responses collected within the available research timeframe. The study also employed convenience sampling, as participants who were accessible and willing to participate were included in the research process. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the sociocultural context of Menyali Village and cannot be broadly generalized to other Balinese communities without further investigation.

In addition, the statistical analysis was adjusted to the characteristics of the collected data. Since the assumption testing indicated that the data did not fully meet the requirement of homogeneity of variance, nonparametric statistical procedures were employed to examine the differences between adults and elders. The use of nonparametric analysis was considered methodologically appropriate to maintain the validity of the statistical interpretation.

Despite these limitations, this study provides empirical evidence regarding the current condition of intergenerational understanding of the endangered *Nigang Sasih* ritual lexicons in Menyali Village. The findings are expected to contribute to the documentation and preservation of Balinese ritual language and may serve as a reference for future studies employing larger samples or mixed method approaches.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the research background and problem identification, this study was guided by the following research questions:

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

1.5 Purposes of the Study

The empirical evidence in this study was obtained from:

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

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.6.1 Conceptual Significance

This study contributes conceptually to the fields of linguistics, ecolinguistics, anthropology, and ritual language studies by providing empirical

evidence regarding the intergenerational understanding of endangered ritual lexicons. Through the comparison between adults' and elders' perceived understanding of the *Nigang Sasih* ritual lexicons in Menyali Village, this research offers insight into patterns of lexical maintenance and potential lexical erosion within a specific sociocultural context. The findings enrich scholarly discussion concerning language sustainability, intergenerational language transmission, and the preservation of ritual language in Balinese society. In addition, this study expands previous research on Balinese ritual lexicons by moving beyond lexical documentation toward the quantitative investigation of language understanding across generations.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a. For the Local Community in Menyali Village

By providing empirical evidence regarding differences in perceived understanding between adults and elders, this study may help increase community awareness of the importance of preserving the endangered lexicons used in the *Nigang Sasih* ritual. The findings are also expected to encourage community-based efforts to strengthen the transmission of ritual language and traditional cultural knowledge across generations.

b. For Educators, Linguists, and Language Preservation Efforts

The findings of this study provide relevant insights for educators, linguists, and cultural practitioners involved in language preservation and cultural education. By presenting measurable data regarding the current condition of ritual lexicon understanding, the study may support the development of educational activities, revitalization programs, and cultural initiatives aimed

at sustaining Balinese ritual lexicons and promoting deeper cultural understanding within traditional contexts.

c. For Future Researchers

By employing a quantitative approach to examine perceived understanding of endangered ritual lexicons, this study may serve as a methodological and conceptual reference for future research related to intergenerational language transmission, ritual language preservation, and endangered lexicons within specific sociocultural settings.

