

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter introduces the study and presents the background of the study, problem identification, limitation of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language plays a vital role in religious and cultural traditions across the world. It is not only a tool for communication, but also a medium through which values, beliefs, and identities are expressed and preserved. In many communities, language is deeply connected to ceremonial practices, helping to shape how traditions are passed from one generation to the next. In Bali, this connection between language and culture is especially strong, as seen in the various rituals that reflect the island's rich spiritual and cultural heritage Mudana (2018). One of the most meaningful rituals in Balinese Hindu tradition is the *Metatah* ritual, which marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. This ritual continues to be performed in many areas, including Menyali Village, where the local community still uses the Balinese language, the Menyali dialect, in their daily life. In Menyali, the *Metatah* ritual is carried out with deep respect, and the specific ritual lexicons used in the process are considered an important part of the village's cultural identity.

In carrying out various cultural and religious traditions, Balinese people use a special lexicon that is only used in certain contexts Budasi (2023). In the context

of the *Metatah* ritual, the lexicon used is a fundamental part of the ceremony to help ensure that the ritual is performed correctly and its meaning is fully understood. The *Metatah* ritual is believed to purify individuals by reducing Sad Ripu, six negative human traits: Kama (lust), Lobha (greed), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance), Moha (confusion), and Matsarya (jealousy) Budhawati (2013). This ceremony also teaches discipline and self-control, shaping individuals to become responsible members of society. In Menyali Village, this tradition is still carried out with deep cultural and spiritual meaning. Throughout the ritual, a special lexicon is used to describe the various elements, objects, and actions in the ceremony. These lexicons have significant cultural value because they help maintain and convey the wisdom contained in the ritual. However, preliminary studies show that the adult generation in Menyali Village has limited understanding of these lexicons, which threatens the continuity of tradition and weakens cultural identity Budasi & Suryasa (2021). Although these lexicons still exist, the adult generation is increasingly less familiar with them. The elder generation tends to demonstrate stronger perceived understanding and familiarity with these terms, while the adult generation appears to feel less confident in understanding or using them appropriately within the ritual context. In response to this phenomenon, concrete efforts are needed to preserve and maintain these lexicons by examining the extent to which community members perceive their understanding of the lexicons used in the *Metatah* ritual. That way, the lexicon can continue to be understood and passed on to future generations.

Understanding the lexicons used in traditional rituals such as *Metatah* is very important in preserving cultural values and maintaining the continuity of ancestral heritage. Lexicon refers to a collection of vocabulary, expressions, and

terms used by the community in everyday communication and in the context of traditional ceremonies. This lexicon not only carries literal meaning but also contains deep cultural values. Mondal (2017) explains that lexical meanings are formed through semantic relations, where words are understood based on their relationship with other terms within a semantic network. In traditional rituals, this semantic network allows lexicons to function as carriers of cultural knowledge, symbolic meanings, and social values rather than as isolated vocabulary items.

The *Metatah* ritual, which is an important part of the life cycle in the Balinese Hindu tradition, involves various symbolic stages expressed through certain traditional terms. Andriningsih (2020) explains that elements of the *Metatah* ceremony reflect not only ritual procedures but also social, spiritual, and communal values embedded in the terms used during the ritual. However, along with generational changes and shifting social dynamics, the adult generation's perceived understanding and familiarity with these ritual lexicons appear to be gradually decreasing. Therefore, it is important to examine how adults and elders perceive their understanding of these ritual lexicons in order to better understand the continuity of endangered cultural language across generations.

Previous research on ritual lexicons in Bali shows that each community has a different language tradition. Research by Budasi (2021) entitled "*Cultural Views of the North Balinese Community on Ngidih Marriage Reflected from its Lexicon*," identified 62 cultural terms in the nine stages of the Ngidih ceremony. Another study by Putri and Santika (2020), "*Emotional Lexicon in Male and Female Communication: A Study of Balinese Language in South Kuta*," showed differences in emotional expression based on gender that enrich the language variation of the

Balinese community. Meanwhile, research by Angelita (2023) entitled "*Procedures and Lexicons in the Ngerorod Wedding Ceremony in Sidetapa Village, North Bali,*" found 27 unique terms in the stages of the ceremony, each with contextual cultural meaning.

In the context of the *Metatah* ritual, a study conducted by Natih (2025) entitled "*Lexicons Used in the Procedures of Metatah Ritual in Menyali Village*" identified 35 specific lexicons used across ten procedural stages of the ritual. Her study revealed that these lexicons represent objects, materials, actions, and offerings that carry deep cultural significance, particularly related to the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*. While this research successfully documented and interpreted the ceremonial lexicons, it focused primarily on identification and cultural meaning from a qualitative perspective. However, it did not investigate how different age groups perceive their understanding of these lexicons, particularly in the context of intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

Additionally, a relevant study by Budasi (2021) examined community members' understanding of ritual lexicons in the *Tabuh Rah* ceremony in Menyali Village. Their quantitative research compared male and female understanding of 76 ritual lexicons and found that gender significantly affected comprehension levels, with men showing higher understanding due to the masculine connotations of *Tabuh Rah* rituals. Despite these valuable contributions, very few studies have examined the intergenerational differences in understanding ritual lexicons especially within the *Metatah* ritual context. This research addressed that gap by investigating and comparing how adults and elders in Menyali Village perceive their understanding of the endangered ritual lexicons used in the *Metatah* ritual.

This study not only documented the ritual lexicons themselves, but also explored how these cultural elements are perceived, maintained, and transmitted across generations within the community.

This study is not just a linguistic investigation but it is a cultural call to action. By identifying the gaps in how different generations perceive their understanding of ritual lexicons, this study contributes to raising awareness about the importance of preserving these unique cultural expressions. Ritual lexicons are part of a community's soul. They hold knowledge that cannot be replaced by translation or modern substitutes. When they are lost, a part of the culture disappears too.

Previous studies have shown that ritual lexicons in Bali contain deep symbolic, spiritual, and social meanings, while differences in language understanding may occur across social groups and generations. In the context of the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village, the existence of specialized ritual lexicons reflects important cultural values that continue to be maintained by the community. However, limited understanding among younger generations may threaten the transmission of this cultural knowledge over time. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine and compare adults' and elders' perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons used in the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village. By focusing on how different generations perceive and interpret these ritual lexicons, this study seeks to provide empirical insight into the continuity of cultural knowledge, the transmission of ritual language across generations, and the preservation of Balinese cultural heritage in the midst of social change.

1.2 Problem Identification

This research is inspired by the interesting phenomenon of the unique language used in Balinese Hindu rituals, particularly in the *Metatah* ceremony. *Metatah* is one of the most important life-cycle rituals for Balinese Hindus, symbolizing the transition from childhood to adulthood. The ceremony is not only a religious obligation but also carries deep cultural meaning, as it teaches discipline, self-control, and spiritual purification. Within this ritual, a number of special lexicons are used to refer to objects, offerings, actions, and stages of the ceremony. These lexicons represent more than just vocabulary; they embody cultural knowledge and spiritual philosophy that reflect the identity of the Balinese community. Menyali Village in Buleleng, North Bali, is selected as the research site because the community there continues to actively perform the *Metatah* ritual while also preserving the use of their local dialect in daily life. This makes Menyali an authentic and significant context to study how ritual language is maintained within a living tradition.

However, with the ongoing influence of globalization and modernization, there are concerns that the perceived understanding of these ritual lexicons is no longer equally maintained across generations. Adults, who are generally more exposed to external cultural influences and modern lifestyles, may demonstrate lower perceived familiarity and understanding of the ritual lexicons than elders, who are often regarded as the custodians of cultural and ritual knowledge. As a result, this potential intergenerational gap raises important questions regarding how the lexicons of the *Metatah* ritual are perceived, transmitted, and preserved within the community over time.

Therefore, this study focuses on examining whether there are differences in the comprehension of *Metatah* ritual lexicons between adults (26–45 years) and elders (46–65 years) in Menyali Village. By investigating intergenerational understanding, the research aims to provide insights into the vitality of ritual lexicons and contribute to awareness and preservation efforts, ensuring that cultural identity remains strong and meaningful for future generations.

1.3 Limitation of the Study

In line with the identified problem, this research concentrated on the study of lexicons as one of the important branches of linguistics, with particular attention to the endangered ritual lexicons used in the *Metatah* ceremony. The study did not merely document the lexicons, but also examined the extent to which these terms were comprehended across different generations in Menyali Village. A quantitative comparative design was employed to obtain empirical evidence regarding the level of understanding between two generational groups, namely adults (26–45 years) and elders (46–65 years). This approach enabled statistical examination of whether significant differences existed between the two groups and to what extent generational variation influenced the vitality of ritual lexicons.

However, this research was conducted on a relatively small scale. Although the total population of adults and elders in Menyali Village reached 2,907 individuals, the final dataset consisted of 100 respondents, comprising 50 adults and 50 elders. Questionnaires were distributed to a broader number of potential participants; nevertheless, only 100 completed responses were returned within the predetermined data collection period. The limited timeframe, accessibility constraints, and participant availability influenced the final number of respondents.

The study applied a combination of quota sampling and convenience sampling, in which equal group representation was maintained while participation depended on respondents' willingness and accessibility. As a result, the findings reflect the characteristics of the selected participants and cannot be generalized to the entire population of Menyali Village without further large-scale investigation.

From a statistical perspective, preliminary assumption testing indicated that the data did not fully satisfy parametric requirements, particularly regarding the homogeneity of variance between groups. Therefore, the Independent Samples t-test was not appropriate for this dataset. Instead, the Mann–Whitney U test was employed as a non-parametric alternative to compare comprehension levels between adults and elders. This statistical decision ensured that the analysis remained methodologically sound despite the distributional limitations of the data.

Given these limitations, future research is recommended to involve a larger and more representative sample, potentially through probability-based sampling techniques, in order to enhance generalizability and statistical power. Additionally, further studies may integrate qualitative approaches, such as interviews or ethnographic observation, to explore deeper sociocultural factors underlying generational differences in ritual lexicon comprehension.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the research background presented above, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows :

- a. What is the level of adults' perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village?

- b. What is the level of elders' perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village?
- c. Is there any significant difference between adults and elders in their perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village?

1.5 Purpose of The Study

In line with these research questions, the objectives of this study are defined accordingly :

- a. To identify the level of adults' perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village.
- b. To identify the level of elders' perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village.
- c. To determine whether there is a significant difference between adults and elders in their perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons of the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village.

1.6 Significance of The Study

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the field of linguistics, particularly in the study of lexicon, endangered language, and cultural linguistics. By examining the perceived understanding of the endangered lexicons used in the *Metatah* ritual in Menyali Village, this study provides empirical insights into how ritual language is maintained, understood, and transmitted across generations. Furthermore, this research contributes to discussions on lexical endangerment by

highlighting how cultural and ritual lexicon may gradually weaken when younger generations no longer fully understand their meanings and functions. The results of this study are also expected to become a useful reference for future researchers who are interested in investigating ritual lexicons and intergenerational language transmission in different cultural contexts. In addition, this research may help raise awareness among the community, especially younger generations, regarding the importance of preserving ritual language as part of Balinese cultural identity and local wisdom.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

The results of this study are expected to offer benefits for various stakeholders in the community, including:

1.6.2.1 Menyali Villagers

This study provides documented evidence of the lexicons used in the *Metatah* ritual, supporting cultural preservation and strengthening intergenerational transmission within the community.

1.6.2.2 English Language Education Department

The study aims to enhance the understanding of lexicons within the academic community, benefiting both lecturers and students who are engaged in the study of linguistics.

1.6.2.3 Other Researchers

This research can be a foundational reference for future studies, offering guidelines and source material for researchers interested in exploring similar topics in other cultural contexts.

1.6.2.4 The Readers

The study offers valuable information and additional knowledge about the lexicons specific to Balinese culture, particularly in relation to the *Metatah* ceremony, enriching the reader's understanding of these cultural practices.

