

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the research background, the identification of the research problem, research limitations, the research question, the research objectives, and the significance of the research.

1.1 Research Background

Language is very important in human life because it is not only a tool for communication but also a symbol of social and cultural identity (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Through language, humans can interact, build relationships, and pass on their culture to the next generation (Chaer, Abdul dan Agustina, 2010). One special part of language is swearing, which has strong social and emotional meanings. Although language is generally used to communicate constructively, some words, such as swear words, can interfere with communication. These words show how culture and social rules influence the way people speak.

In communication, if someone is angry, they usually use swear words to emphasize their emotions when they speak. Swear words are a universal linguistic phenomenon that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. They are often considered taboo in every society, but have important communicative functions in various societies. According to Stapleton et al. (2022) Swear words can express or convey emotions, emphasize a point, such as anger, humor, frustration, or surprise, depending on the cultural and social context in which they are used, and even serve as a means of social

bonding. In addition, Hagen (2013) says, the use of swear words is embedded in cultural and social contexts, thus influencing how individuals perceive and react to these words.

Related to the use of swear words, comparing swear words between Balinese and Swiss German speakers is crucial to understanding how language and cultural differences shape the expression of strong emotions and social interactions. One interesting case is the potential misunderstanding that arises when Swiss German tourists in Bali use language or expressions that are commonplace in their home country, but may be considered highly offensive to Balinese speakers in Bali.

This is all the more relevant because although Germany and Switzerland are different countries, they both share the same root language, German. However, in the Swiss region, a local variety called Swiss German (*Schweizerdeutsch*) is used, which has its own characteristics in pronunciation, vocabulary, and everyday usage compared to Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*). Swiss German is the mother tongue of most people in the German-speaking region of Switzerland, and is used in informal interactions, including emotional expressions such as swearing. Therefore, the use of Swiss German in this study is relevant to represent the linguistic experience of Swiss people in a real-world context.

Germany and Switzerland continue to show their dominance as one of the countries with the highest number of visits to Bali, as mentioned by Artajaya & Yanti (2020) and Bali Hotels Association (2023). This growing trend highlights the increasing cultural and social interactions between Swiss German tourists and Balinese people. These frequent interactions open up opportunities for cross-cultural communication, but also lead to frequent potential misunderstandings, especially one of them regarding the

inappropriate use of swear words, which can have different meanings and social implications in each culture. From the results of the pre-interview, the cause of and inappropriate use of swearwords is that they were never formally learned and informally only done, but without knowing the meaning, placement, and context. This seems to be the same for both Balinese speakers and Swiss German speakers.

These linguistic differences have led to many incidents of miscommunication. Artajaya & Yanti (2020) highlighted that some German tourists in Bali experienced difficulties in interacting due to a lack of awareness regarding local language norms. A study by Wiyasa et al. (2017) found that in the Bali Aga community of Sidetapa Village, swear words such as *celeng* ‘pig’ and *bangsat* can be considered funny or insulting depending on the situation. This is in contrast to Swiss German-speaking tourists, who may not recognize the hierarchical nature of Balinese usage, often resulting in unintentional offenses.

The importance of cross-cultural awareness is also supported by statistics. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism (2020), 38% of German tourists visiting Bali reported using swear words in casual conversation, while only 15% realized that such language could be considered inappropriate by locals. In addition, research conducted by Artajaya & Yanti (2020) showed that German tourists' perceptions of the language proficiency of tour guides in Denpasar had a significant impact on their overall travel experience, thus emphasizing the need for effective communication training for both parties.

Bali remains a popular destination for Swiss German tourists, and maintaining harmonious interactions between locals and visitors depends on effective communication and cultural understanding. By recognizing and respecting differences

in language use, particularly regarding swear words, both parties can prevent misunderstandings that could negatively impact tourism relations. Failure to address these issues can lead to conflicts that damage Bali's image as a tourist-friendly destination and disrupt the overall visitor experience. Therefore, cultural education and language training for tourism professionals in Bali are essential in fostering positive and respectful interactions with Swiss German-speaking tourists.

Based on preliminary observation, if this is left unchecked, misunderstandings will continue to occur. If this misunderstanding continues, it can affect relationships between individuals as well as relationships between countries. In addition, in the context of tourism, this can have an impact on reducing the number of visitors and decreasing state revenues. This is relevant to the theory of Sayer (2013), which says the impact of misunderstandings on global relations is evident when differences in inferential processes lead to misinterpretation of policies and disconnection of communication between countries. Related to language understanding, references are needed for both parties. However, until now, there has been no study that specifically discusses the Comparison of Swear Words Between Balinese and Swiss German. Therefore, there is a need for a study that can bridge the gap, given the absence of written information about the similarities and differences in aspects of swearwords, such as form, function, and reference.

Based on the above point, this research is not only important, but further research should be conducted to bridge the cultural gap and increase mutual understanding. It provides valuable insights for Swiss German travelers to be sensitive to the cultural context of the Balinese language, especially regarding swear words that may have strong connotations. On the other hand, it also helps Balinese who plan to travel or

work in Switzerland and Germany to better understand everyday Swiss German, including swear words, which may be used differently or more casually compared to Balinese culture.

1.2 Identification of Research Problem

Based on the Bali Hotels Association (2023), tourists from Germany and Switzerland are among the top ten countries with the highest number of visits to Bali. However, differences in the use and meaning of swear words between Balinese and Swiss German cultures gave the potential to cause misunderstandings, social tensions, and even conflicts, especially in the context of tourism and the world of work. Previous studies have discussed swear words in each culture separately, but studies comparing their forms, functions, and references are still very limited. Given the increasingly close social and economic interactions between Balinese people and Swiss German speakers, it is important to understand these language differences to support more effective cross-cultural communication and reduce the potential for conflict.

1.3 Research Limitation

This research focuses on the comparison between Balinese and Swiss German swear words in terms of forms, functions, and references. This study uses primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews with native speakers and secondary data collected from relevant journal articles and theses. However, this study has several limitations. The Balinese data used in this study are specifically based on the Buleleng dialect of Balinese, which may not fully represent other regional dialects of Balinese. Despite this limitation, by combining these sources, this research offers deeper insights

into the sociolinguistic aspects of swearing and contribute to the development of future studies in cross-cultural communication.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the topic outlined above, the research question of this research is:

1. What are the similarities and differences in the forms of swear words between Balinese and Swiss German?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the functions of swear words between Balinese and Swiss German?
3. What are the similarities and differences in the references of swear words between Balinese and Swiss German?

1.5 Research Objective

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study could be obtained as follows:

1. To find out the similarities and differences in the forms of swear words between Balinese and Swiss German.
2. To analyze the similarities and differences in the functions of swear words between Balinese and Swiss German.
3. To explore the similarities and differences in the references of swear words between Balinese and Swiss German.

1.6 Research Significances

As stated in the research objectives above, this research provides two significances and is also expected to provide meaningful and valuable contributions to:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This research contributes to the field of sociolinguistics by deepening our understanding of how cultural context shapes the use, perception, and reception of swear words across societies. According to Hagen (2013), the use of swear words is deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts, thus influencing individuals' perceptions and emotional responses. Through a comparative analysis of Balinese and Swiss German speakers, this research sheds light on the cultural sensitivities, social norms, and communicative functions of taboo language in a multilingual and multicultural environment. By examining swear words in terms of their form, function, and referent, this study draws on relevant sociolinguistic theories to offer insights into how swearing operates as a linguistic and social phenomenon across cultures.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a. For Balinese

Helping Balinese people, especially those working in the tourism and hospitality sectors, to understand Swiss German swear words to avoid misunderstandings and improve cross-cultural communication.

b. For Swiss German

Helping Swiss German speakers visiting Bali understand the local language rules and customs, so they can avoid misunderstandings and interact with Balinese people in a better and more polite way.

c. For Tour Guide and Tourism

As a reference for tour guides and tourism professionals in designing more

culturally sensitive communication training and preventing language conflicts.

d. For English Language Education (ELE)

Provides insights into English language education, intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, and language use, and serves as a reference for the development of culturally sensitive language learning material.

e. For the Readers

Providing insight for readers in the fields of sociolinguistics and intercultural communication regarding the function of swear words as a reflection of social norms and cultural identity.

