

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This study focuses on the foundation of the study. It begins with the research background, followed by the problem identification, research limitations, research questions, research objectives, and the significance of the research.

1.1 Research Background

Language is a means of communication that functions as a fundamental tool to convey cultural meaning, as well as a medium for transmitting culture (Nunan, 2012). Therefore, culture forms a foundation of communication by shaping message meaning and determining how messages are conveyed, received, and interpreted (Utami et al., 2017). One approach that specifically examines this relationship is ethnolinguistics. As explained by Soge and Janggo (2024), ethnolinguistics examines the connection between language and culture, emphasizing how each influences the other and how variations in languages around the world reflect differences in culture. Ethnolinguistic studies often pay close attention to the lexicon. The lexicon is a component of language that contains information about the meaning of words and their usage. It enables people to communicate, interact, and preserve their cultural identity (Chaer, 2007; Hasjim et al., 2020). Furthermore, the lexicon has been used to represent various aspects of Balinese culture, including rituals and ceremonies.

However, despite the important role of rituals in preserving these lexicons, the Balinese language is currently facing significant challenges that come from both

internal and external factors. The internal challenges include the declining interest, lack of awareness, and the limited proficiency of the younger generation in using the Balinese language. Meanwhile, external challenges arise mostly from globalization, which has affected society in various ways, including the loss of cultural identity and its language (Alfarhan, 2017). This situation raises concerns about a language shift, where the Balinese language is gradually being abandoned and is no longer widely used as the primary language in everyday communication (Dewi, 2025).

Therefore, to address those challenges, the researcher is recording these traditional lexicons in one of the Balinese cultural rituals. Bali's cultural history is demonstrated through this local wisdom to express gratitude to Ida Sang *Hyang Widhi Wasa* (God) through the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy, which is the fundamental life principle of the Balinese community and acts as a moral foundation to guide them in maintaining harmony in all aspects of life (Sukarma, 2016). Identity is very important to Balinese society because it forms the basis for preserving the continuity of culture, social systems, and beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation. In this case, language plays a crucial role in expressing and upholding the principles of *Tri Hita Karana*. The special lexicons used in Balinese rituals reflect the values of *Tri Hita Karana*, such as the relationship between humans and God (*Parahyangan*), humans and their environment (*Palemahan*), and humans and other humans (*Pawongan*) (Widanti, 2022). All regions in Bali implement the *Tri Hita Karana* concept, particularly in village areas where traditional practices and customs remain deeply rooted.

One manifestation of this philosophy is the *Melasti* ritual, a sacred purification ceremony that is usually performed prior to *Nyepi*. This ritual refers to an act of cleansing natural impurities through the use of sacred life-giving water. In Hinduism, bodies of water such as lakes and seas are regarded as sources of *tirta amerta*, or the water of life, which sustains all living beings (Dauh & Dharma, 2020). The *Melasti* ritual has been practiced for generations and passed down from ancestors. It is a ritual for purifying oneself and the universe, and provides the initial or first stage of purification, namely the purification of the subconscious or *Bhuar Loka* (Putri & Nurita, 2021; Suandi & Sutama, 2021). All sacred Hindu items in the temple, such as statues, shrines, and symbols, are purified and performed at air sources or nearby springs.

Although the *Melasti* ritual follows the same philosophical foundation throughout Bali, its implementation varies across villages according to local traditions. One example is the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village, which has several unique characteristics. This ritual is generally conducted once a year, which is before *Nyepi* (Silence Day). However, the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village is uniquely conducted after *Nyepi* (Silence Day), and has its own primary aims, which, besides purifying the sacred objects and this specific ritual serves agricultural purposes, such as eradicating pests and cleansing the fields. Besides purifying the village and sacred objects, the Sema Agung villagers believe that the *Melasti* ritual is an effort to ward off plagues and disease in the rice fields, as well as to invoke fertility and to harmonize the macro and micro environments, as most of the villagers work in the rice fields. For this reason, examining and documenting the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual is essential to preserve cultural values and

sustain the ethnolinguistic identity of the Balinese community. Lastly, the instruments in the *Melasti* ritual are very important, one of which is *gredagan*, which is a traditional musical instrument made of bamboo that is played as an accompaniment to the gong musical instrument with the aim of driving away pests that damage people's gardens. Meanwhile, *capil klangсах*, which is a woven hat made of coconut leaves to shade and protect the villagers from the sun, is a tradition that has been carried out from generation to generation since our ancestors.

Previous studies have explored the diversity and cultural richness reflected in the lexicons of various Balinese rituals. For instance, Budasi et al. (2021), in their study *The Status of Lexicon Used in Tabuh Rah Ritual in Menyali Village, North Bali: An Ethnolinguistic Study*, collected data through questionnaires and interviews, identifying 71 lexicons used in the *Tabuh Rah* ritual. Similarly, Budasi and Ana (2025), in *The Balinese Alpha Generation's Understanding of Traditional Balinese Game Lexicons: Urban vs Rural Areas*, identified 86 lexicons related to traditional games and found that students in rural areas demonstrated a higher level of understanding compared to those in urban areas. Furthermore, Budasi and Suryasa (2021), in *The Cultural View of North Bali Community towards Ngidih Marriage Reflected from Its Lexicons*, identified nine stages in the *Ngidih* marriage ritual and documented 62 lexicons, each reflecting specific cultural meanings within the community.

Despite these unique characteristics, the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village have received limited scholarly attention and have not been comprehensively documented from an ethnolinguistic perspective. This indicates a gap in understanding the specific lexicons and their cultural meanings. The urgency

of this study lies in the need to preserve and document these lexicons as part of Balinese cultural heritage. In the era of globalization, the use of traditional lexicons is gradually decreasing, especially among younger generations. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by focusing on the distinctive implementation of the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village, Klungkung Regency, Bali, particularly in terms of its lexicons, their forms, and their cultural meanings. Based on this, this study aims to identify and analyze the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual, as well as to examine their forms and cultural meanings.

1.2 Problem Identification

The *Melasti* ritual has long been a traditional practice of the people in Sema Agung Village. However, many young people do not fully understand the meaning of this ritual. This is due to several reasons, such as the influence of globalization that makes the younger generation tend to undervalue the ritual and its cultural significance, encourages them to use national or global languages more often, and they become less interested because of their limited understanding of the meaning of the ritual terms. Because of these conditions, the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual are at risk of being forgotten or lost. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the cultural meanings of the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual. By examining this phenomenon, the researcher believes that the study will have a meaningful impact on preserving cultural knowledge.

1.3 Research Limitation

Based on the problem identification above, this study focuses on the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village, Klungkung Regency, Bali. It uses

a descriptive qualitative design to focus on the word classes, lexical meanings, and their cultural meaning.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the research background, the research questions of this study are:

1. What are the procedures of the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village?
2. What are the word classes of the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village?
3. What are the lexical meanings used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village?
4. What are the cultural meanings used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village?

1.5 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the procedure of the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village
2. To identify the procedure of the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village
3. word classes of the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village
4. To analyze the lexical meanings of the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village.
5. To analyze the cultural meanings of the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village.

1.6 Research Significances

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to readers, especially those who are studying and interested in linguistics.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study aims to provide useful information and knowledge, especially in the field of linguistics. By examining the lexicons used in the *Melasti* ritual in Sema Agung Village, Klungkung Regency, Bali, this research seeks to improve understanding of linguistic aspects, including lexical forms and the cultural meanings contained in each term used in the ritual. In addition, this study highlights the importance of preserving Balinese culture through the analysis of its unique ritual lexicons.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

This study aims to provide practical benefits to government agencies, educators, researchers, and the surrounding community by providing insights applicable to real-world linguistic and cultural contexts.

a. For Government

This study provides practical value for the government, educators, researchers, and the local community by offering insights applicable to real-world linguistic and cultural contexts.

b. For the English Language Education Department

The study provides support for English Education students in strengthening their cross-cultural understanding by raising awareness of the close relationship between language and culture. Through an examination of the lexicon used in the *Melasti* ritual, students can gain insight into how language functions to

preserve traditions and cultural identity, which is essential for effective cross-cultural communication.

c. For Future Research

This study provides a reference for future research on the lexicon, lexical features, and cultural heritage of Balinese rituals, thereby encouraging further investigation in this field.

d. For Villagers

This research offers an educational opportunity for the people of Sema Agung Village to enhance their understanding of cultural practices and their meanings, while fostering a sense of pride in their cultural identity and heritage. The appropriate use of lexicon also helps ensure that rituals are conducted correctly and respectfully, which is essential for preserving their sanctity and supporting the spiritual well-being of participant.

