

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter provides an introduction to the study, including the research background, problem identification, scope of the study, research questions, research objectives, and research significance.

1.1 Research Background

Language plays an important role as a medium for preserving the traditions, beliefs, and values of society, while also serving as a tool for communication and a repository of cultural identity (Sanggabuwana & Andrini, 2022; Santoso, 2017). Through its linguistic system, language reflects the culture of its society and enables speakers to understand and maintain their cultural identity (Izzanti et al., 2025; Santoso, 2017). In addition, language serves as a means of transmitting emotions, knowledge, and cultural values that contribute to strengthening a sense of belonging within a community (Datta, 2023). One important linguistic element closely related to culture is the lexicon, which consists of unique words, expressions, and idioms that reflect the experiences, art, and collective knowledge of society (Suratminto, 2009), which is closely related to cultural practices, reflecting the experiences, arts, and knowledge of society (Sanubarianto et al., 2025). People tend to forget the culture of the Balinese themselves (Dewi et al., 2020). This condition reinforces the argument that the loss of cultural elements may result in the loss of corresponding aspects of language (Budasi, 2021), which in turn contributes to the increasing threat to the

sustainability of cultural lexicons due to globalization and modernization, particularly through the influence of foreign languages and shifting language practices (Fikri et al., 2024). This condition highlights the urgency of preserving linguistic heritage as an integral part of *Nusantara* cultural identity (Kusumawati, 2016; Santoso, 2017).

Several local languages in Indonesia have been reported to be extinct, while many others are critically endangered, particularly due to the limited transmission of these languages to young generations (Hartono, 2024). This language shift is influenced by the decreasing use of regional languages in everyday life. Studies further show that the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia in educational, administrative, and media domains has contributed to language shift and weakened intergenerational language transmission (Farisiyah & Zamzani, 2018; Harimansyah, 2017; Ewing, 2003; Yohantho, 2025).

The condition of endangered and regional languages in Indonesia has increasingly affected the transmission of cultural meanings and community identity, as these languages represent essential elements of local heritage (Suhassatya, 2025). A similar situation can be observed in Balinese culture, particularly within traditional rituals, where the understanding of ritual lexicon among the younger generation has gradually declined. Although rituals such as *Ngaben*, *Ogoh-Ogoh*, and other ceremonial practices are still active, many young participants engage in these rituals without fully understanding the meanings and cultural functions of the specific terms, offerings, and ritual stages involved (Putri & Rosidin, 2023). This condition aligns with a study by Tangkas (2015) entitled “*Tuturan Majejiwan dalam Ritual Mapaselang Bali*,” which reveals that ritual

dialogues contain unique lexical items, particularly nouns and verbs from Old Balinese ritual language, carrying deep cultural meanings but are no longer widely understood by the community. Without systematic efforts to document and preserve these linguistic elements, the cultural meanings embedded in ritual language may continue to weaken, posing a risk to the sustainability of linguistic and cultural heritage (Arsiwan, 2025).

One example of language shift within Balinese ritual practices can be observed in the tradition of *Gebug Ende* practiced in Seraya Village, Karangasem Regency. *Gebug Ende* is one of the unique rituals passed down from generation to generation by the people of Seraya Village, Karangasem, which functions as a ritual supplication for rain during the dry season to God to bring rain, especially during the dry season when the arid Seraya region desperately needs water for agriculture. In its execution, this ritual involves a symbolic ritual combat using long rattan sticks called “*gebug*” and shields made from dried cowhide called “*ende*,” played by both adults and children as a spiritual expression and a manifestation of cultural values such as courage, agility, and community solidarity. This ritual is also rich in traditional lexicon that not only serves as instruction but also holds deep meanings related to spiritual beliefs, local history, and Balinese cultural identity. Words like “*gebug*” and “*ende*” are part of the linguistic heritage reflecting the close connection between language and culture. However, social change and globalization have weakened younger generations’ understanding of these lexical terms, these lexical terms face the threat of extinction, particularly among younger generations who are increasingly losing understanding of the sacred terms used in this ritual, risking a shift in the ritual’s

perceived meaning. This condition indicates that the younger generation is increasingly unfamiliar with the lexicon used in *Gebug Ende*, posing a risk that the original meaning and purpose of this ritual will be lost. If this lexicon is not preserved, not only will the *Gebug Ende* ritual be at risk of facing a gradual loss of cultural meaning, but also the rich cultural heritage it embodies.

For this reason, efforts to document and analyze the traditional lexicon used in *Gebug Ende* are important for maintaining its cultural values. This condition indicates that modernization and globalization have begun to affect the sustainability of traditional lexicons within specific cultural practices. If the lexicon of *Gebug Ende* continues to be neglected, the impact will not only be on the ritual itself but also on the cultural identity of the Seraya community as a whole, because this ritual contains spiritual symbols for summoning rain that could lose their essence and shift into mere entertainment without deep meaning. The lexicon in *Gebug Ende* is not only a means of communication in the performance of rituals, but also preserves historical, spiritual, and social values that are an important part of the community's identity. Currently, studies on *Gebug Ende* are still limited and focus more on its historical or artistic aspects, while linguistic aspects, particularly the use and meaning of the lexicon in the context of rituals, are rarely touched upon. Given that understanding the function of lexicon in a cultural context is crucial for preserving the authenticity and sustainability of traditions, the novelty of this research lies in its approach, which combines linguistic studies with the preservation of local culture through the documentation and analysis of a nearly extinct lexicon. By focusing on the *Gebug Ende* ritual lexicon, this research not only enriches linguistic knowledge but also

contributes to concrete efforts to preserve Bali's culturally significant heritage for future generations.

1.2 Problem Identification

This research is motivated by the phenomenon of language use in the *Gebug Ende* ritual practiced by the people of Seraya Village, Karangasem. The ritual contains various traditional lexicons used at different stages of the ritual process. However, with modernization and language shifts, many members of the community, especially young people in Seraya Village, Karangasem, are no longer familiar with or fully understand the meaning of these lexicons, such as "*Penyalin*" and "*Angkepan*". This condition can lead to the loss of the original cultural and spiritual meaning of the ritual, causing *Gebug Ende* to be seen only as a cultural performance rather than a meaningful traditional practice. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the lexicon used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual and to examine the cultural meaning behind it. By documenting and explaining these lexicons, this research is expected to contribute to the preservation of local languages, cultural values, and community identity, as well as support the continuity of the *Gebug Ende* ritual for future generations.

1.3 Limitation

This study is limited to the lexicons used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual as practiced in Seraya Village, Karangasem Regency, Bali. This study focuses on identifying the lexicon used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual and the cultural meanings it conveys during the ritual, particularly those related to the stages, sequence of activities, tools, and verbal expressions. This study employs an ethnographic approach through in-depth interviews and observation. However, the study will be

conducted using a non-participant observation method, with limitations regarding the duration of the observation and the conduct of in-depth interviews with one *Penglingsir* (a respected senior figure), one participant or ritual practitioner in the *Gebug Ende* ritual and one *Jero Pendalem* (a traditional ritual custodian).

1.4 Research Questions

- 1.4.1 What lexicons are used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual in Karangasem Regency?
- 1.4.2 What are the cultural meanings of the lexicons used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual in Karangasem Regency?

1.5 Research Objectives

- 1.5.1 To identify the lexicons used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual in Karangasem Regency.
- 1.5.2 To analyze the cultural meaning of the lexicons used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual in Karangasem Regency.

1.6 Significance of the Research

There are two implications to this research: theoretical and practical. Below is an explanation of both.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will improve knowledge of the connection between language and culture, especially in reference to Bali's traditional ritual activities. By analyzing the particular vocabulary employed in the *Gebug Ende* rite and the cultural connotations ingrained in each lexical item, this research advances ethnolinguistic research to provide a clear understanding of the lexicon's meaning and its cultural meanings (Budasi et al., 2021) This

research advances ethnolinguistic research by offering deeper insight into how language reflects cultural values. In order to assist the preservation of *Gebug Ende* as a significant type of cultural heritage, this research attempts to preserve language expressions that reflect local values, belief systems, and community identity through the documentation and analysis of these ritual lexicons.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

- a. This research can help the local community, especially the young generation in Seraya Village, to understand the lexicon and cultural meanings used in the *Gebug Ende* ritual, so that the traditional language used in the ritual is not gradually forgotten.
- b. This research can contribute to the preservation of local culture by providing systematic documentation of the *Gebug Ende* ritual and its lexicon, which can be accessed by the wider community, including cultural observers and tourists interested in Balinese traditions.
- c. This research can serve as a reference for future researchers conducting similar studies, particularly in the field of ethnolinguistics, as it provides insights into the relationship between language, culture, and ritual practices within the Hindu tradition, specifically through the lexicon and cultural meanings found in the *Gebug Ende* ritual.