

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of this research, problem identification, limitation of the research, research questions, research objectives and significances of the research.

1.1 Research Background

Language has function as a verbal communication tool which allows individuals to interact and build relation in society (Yani et al., 2017). In sociolinguistic studies, language variation demonstrates how speakers construct meaning within particular social and cultural contexts. Besides for communicating, language also used to express feelings and emotion. Furthermore, language forms do not always have positive meaning as some of words are considered offensive, impolite and inappropriate to use in social interactions. A collection of offensive, inappropriate and impolite words used to communicate is referred to as swear words. McEnery (2004) stated that swear words are dirty words of a language spoken by language users that are insulting, disrespectful, homophobic, racist, dirty, and which cause a violation of decency. Swear words themselves have been widely used by people to express thoughts and feelings. Swear words are also used by all levels of society. According to Fanny (2014), swear words often used by both genders and different age groups in daily conversations. Swear words are frequently used within certain groups as joke to represent intimacy among members. The widespread use of swear words become significant intercultural context when speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds completely interact with each other by swearing.

According to Indriani et al. (2020), swearing could have different meaning based on the context and intention. Swearing may be planned or expressed spontaneously which may have negative meaning but may also have positive meaning (Suryadi et al., 2021). However, swearing can be misunderstood by most of society with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Misunderstanding highlights the importance of examining swear words not only as an expression of emotion, but also as a linguistic practice that is widely used in different cultural

contexts and becomes part of everyday communication. It becomes linguistic phenomenon that appears across different cultures and languages.

The use of swear words are common in every language specifically English and other local language. There are several examples of swear words which were often practiced in English. Common examples of swear words in English include, *fuck*, *damn*, and *hell*. Swear words itself are considered as an offensive, impolite, abusive, disrespectful and vulgar meaning. In Accordance with that, the existence of swear words spread widely all over the world including in Bali. In Bali, swear words are common language which heard by many people every time. Many people in Bali specifically Buleleng speak the swear words fluently. According to Saniada et al. (2023), Balinese people use swear words to show intimacy and solidarity in informal communication with one another. There are several common swear words such as *pirata* ‘ancestor’, *naskleng* ‘male genital’, *cicing* ‘dog’ which often spoken by the local especially Buleleng people (Senaputra, 2025).

Moreover, swear words are existed in China with Mandarin as one of the most widely spoken language with over of billion native speakers and many more using it as a second language. Mandarin has unique features like tone that plays a significant role in everyday communication across diverse regions (Plumb, 2016). According to Tone differentiates word meanings even it is the same in written or called *pinyin* in Mandarin. For instance, *mā* means ‘mother’, *má* means ‘numb’, *mǎ* means ‘horse’, ‘*mà*’ means to scold (Li & Thompson, 1977). It becomes an essential part which can influence the meaning and intensity of an expression especially in swearing. Although tone plays an important role in Mandarin, however this study focuses on sociolinguistic aspects of the swear words which include, forms, functions, and references. According to Ningsih (2019), in Chinese culture, swear words not only used to express anger or hatred but also can increase intimacy in relationships like friends or someone who is loved. Insulting in Mandarin Chinese focus more on family and ancestry, Different with English-speaking countries which frequently revolves around bodily functions, religion, or sexual terms (Kasap & Yuzuncu, 2024). There is a common swearing expression in Mandarin that highly offensive, often involving family members including *tā mā de* that means ‘damn’, and there is a phrase *cào nǐ ma* which means ‘fuck’ that has a vulgar meaning which

has different function of usage and refer to strong emotional expression (Murtadhoh & Arini, 2023).

Meanwhile, China as the second most populous country in the world has become one of the countries which dominates tourism sector with Bali as the main destination. The Head of Bali Province Statistics Agency (BPS) also stated that Chinese tourists recorded 42.949 visit Bali in May 2025 (MAO, 2025). Due to the increasing population of foreigners in Bali, which is able to increase the opportunity for communication. The intensity of communication between Balinese and Chinese foreigners might lead to misunderstanding. Swear words are uttered when the misunderstandings occur (Sarnika, 2018). The cause is because of differences in linguistic connotations and meaning between both of the language. According to Budasi (2012), although languages are used in different cultural contexts, they may have different characteristics while still sharing similarities in certain aspects of grammatical structures. Swearing is considered as universal expression. However, the forms and functions of swearing are culture specific. Sets of swear words have different cultures and expressions, which often reflecting social norms and values. Similarities and differences in linguistic and meaning become the concerned in this study which influence how individuals interact and express emotion in cross cultural context.

Considering the increasing interaction between Balinese and Mandarin in tourism, education, and economic sector, a clearer understanding of how swear words function in both languages become socially significant. Previous research on Balinese swear words tend to analyze their forms and functions in specific communities, while studies on Mandarin swearing often highlight linguistic characteristics and sociocultural implications. According to Chen (2024), Previous research has predominantly focused on swear words analysis within English-speaking contexts or comparisons between English and other local language and dialects. Almost none of research has been done in Chinese because most of the publish research is about English swearing (Zhao, 2021). In spite of the richness of cultural and language features of Mandarin and Balinese dialect, there is still limited research which particularly comparing swear words in local languages in Indonesia,

such as Balinese spoken in Buleleng, with major foreign languages such as Mandarin.

Based on the phenomenon, this research entitled “A Comparative Analysis of Swear Words in Balinese and Mandarin” is crucial to be carried out immediately to describe the similarities and differences based on forms, functions, and references by filling the existing void in comparative analysis study specifically regarding to the interaction between Balinese specifically spoken in Buleleng and Mandarin. By comparing both of languages within a comparative framework, this study is expected to enhance readers knowledge and bridge cultural gaps between Balinese specifically spoken in Buleleng and Mandarin. Balinese do not know and understand how much about swear words used by the foreigners and vice versa (Yani et al., 2017). Moreover, this study is crucially needed to contribute theoretically to comparative analysis studies, especially for educators, students, and language learners who engage with both linguistic communities. This study aims to reduce misunderstandings between Chinese tourists and Balinese people that live in Bali also people that live in China within the purpose many people know when and how to use swear words properly and avoid hurting someone’s feeling.

1.2 Problem Identification

Swear words almost used by all different age groups, society, and community in everyday life communication, so that swear words considered offensive and impolite that represent both positive and negative purpose. When swear words are used to express joke to make others laugh, it is considered as positive purpose. While it is used to humiliate someone or to irritate, it is considered as negative purpose. While Balinese often use swearing to build intimacy, Mandarin swear words is frequently using family terms to insult. Various forms, functions, and references of swear words in Balinese and Mandarin showed that there are differences in linguistics aspect and cultural context. In addition, every language has its own meaning, structure, and unique social context, so comparative research can show how cultural differences are reflected in daily communication. In the aspect of linguistic specifically sociolinguistic, the study of swearing can reveal the similarities and differences of swear words which compare certain local language based on the forms, functions, and references that rarely highlighted.

1.3 Research Limitation

This research focused on comparing swear words between Balinese specifically spoken in Buleleng and Mandarin language in terms of forms, functions, and references. This research focused on primary data which collected from three informants of Chinese and Balinese native speakers. For Chinese native speakers are individuals originally from Xin Yang region who works at Balingkang Confucius Institute. This study includes both male and female informants. However, gender is not treated as a separate variable of analysis. The purpose is to avoid limiting the data to a single gender group. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to represent all speakers of Balinese and Mandarin Language. Secondary data were collected from two relevant theses published between 2020 and 2025 that discuss about forms, functions, and references in both Balinese specifically spoken in Buleleng and Mandarin. Consequently, other relevant studies or broader linguistic studies were not included in this research. Furthermore, this study focuses on the comparative aspects of swear words and does not examine other linguistic aspects. The findings are also based on the language use and perspectives provided by the selected informants and available documents, which may not fully represent variations in swear word usage across different regions, age groups, social groups, or communicative situations.

1.4 Research Questions

The research problems could be formulated into research questions as follows:

- a. What are the similarities and differences in the forms of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin?
- b. What are the similarities and differences in the functions of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin?
- c. What are the similarities and differences in the references of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin?

1.5 Research Objective

From the research questions mentioned above, the purpose of the study could be mentioned as follows.

- a. To describe similarities and differences in the forms of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin Language
- b. To describe the similarities and differences in the functions of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin Language
- c. To describe the similarities and differences in the references of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin Language

1.6 Research Significances

This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the comparison of swear words between Balinese specifically Buleleng dialect, and Mandarin. Therefore, this research intends to enrich knowledge about similarities and differences of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin based on its forms, functions, and references.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study provides positive information for linguistic research by exploring similarities and differences of swear words between Balinese and Mandarin. It examines its linguistic characteristics such as forms, function, and references which can help future researchers identify similar patterns in other language. This study helps linguists understand how language usage changes based on societal norms by analysing the various swear words and their appropriate and inappropriate contexts.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

The result of this study for theoretical significance is expected to be useful and readers would acquire value in the research's practical application.

- a. For Readers

The results of this research provide valid information particularly for those who need this research to understand how swear words function differently across cultures. By recognizing the forms, functions and references of swear

words in Balinese and Mandarin, readers can avoid misunderstandings and communicate more appropriate in intercultural settings.

b. For Balinese Speakers

The results of this research are expected to provide information especially for Balinese students, workers, and professionals who deals with Mandarin speakers. In order to avoid misunderstandings, occur between Balinese and Mandarin speakers and maintain respectful communication between workers and students who directly interact and communicate with native speakers.

c. For Mandarin Speakers

This research provides reliable knowledge for Mandarin speakers who visit Bali to comprehend local language culture. The purpose is to prevent misunderstanding and minimize the risk of offending local people through unintentional use of inappropriate expressions in daily conversation and able to communicate with Balinese speakers in respect and polite way.

d. For Future Researchers

The results of this study are expected to help future researchers understand more about the field of linguistics especially in sociolinguistic scope and about the term of swear words use between Balinese and Mandarin. This research can be reliable reference to establish comparative analysis studies, particularly for students of Ganesha University of Education.

e. For English Language Education

This study contributes to English Language Education by providing additional material for discussing sociolinguistics and comparative analysis. The comparison of Balinese and Mandarin swear words considered that the meaning of an expression is not determined by its literal definition alone but may also depend on the speaker's intention, the relationship between informants, and social context. This study helps teacher introduce context sensitive language use and encourage students to consider the potential social effects of the expressions.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and clarify the scope of this research, several key terms are defined as follows:

a. Swear Words

Swear words are words or expressions that are considered offensive, vulgar, taboo, or inappropriate in particular social and cultural contexts. Swear words are defined as dirty words from a language spoken by language users that are humiliating, racist, and dirty, and that causes a violation of decency (Heriyanto, 2020). In this research, swear words refer to offensive expressions used by Balinese and Mandarin speakers in communication to express emotions, insult or abuse others, create humor, emphasize an utterance, or express group or social identity. Therefore, swear words are not limited to expressions of anger or insults, but their meaning and use depend on the social and cultural context in which they occur.

b. Forms of Swear Words

Forms of swear words refer to the grammatical or structural forms in which swear words occur in Balinese and Mandarin. In this research, swear words are classified into three forms, such as: words, phrases, and clauses. According to Carstairs-McCarthy (2002), words can be analysed as the basis of language that composed of morphemes which is smallest part that has grammatical function and meaning. Words are further classified into two types such as monomorphemic and polymorphemic. Phrases are divided into three types such as noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). Clauses consist of a subject and predicate which consider as dependent and independent clause (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). This classification is used to identify the similarities and differences in the grammatical structure of swear words in Balinese and Mandarin.

c. Functions of Swear Words

Functions of swear words refer to the communicative purposes served by swear words when they are used in interaction. In this research, the functions of

swear words are classified into five categories: expressing emotions, abusive, humorous, emphasis, and group or social identity (Wang et al., 2014). These functions indicate that swear words may be used not only to express anger or offend another person but also to create humor, strengthen interpersonal relationships, emphasize an utterance, and indicate membership in or identity with a particular social group.

d. References of Swear Words

References of swear words refer to the particular people, objects, concepts, body-related matters, or sensitive topics that are referred to by swear words. In this research, the references are categorized into six types: sexual terms, excrements, animal names, personal background, mental illness, and religious terms. These categories are used to identify what a swear word refers to. The references categories also show that swear words may reflect concepts and social values that are considered sensitive within particular linguistic and cultural communities.

