E-ISSN: 3031-8629
P-ISSN: 3032-3258
Halaman 1242-1254
Volume 3 Nomor 4 Tahun 2026

LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION OF THE BALINESE *MELUKAT* RITUAL: A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

Dewa Ayu Kadek Claria[1], Radha Andhra Swari[2], A.A.Istri Mas Trisnamayuni[3]
[1,2,3] English Department, Universitas Warmadewa
e-mail: clariadewaayu@gmail.com

Abstract

Abstract: *Melukat* is a spiritual practice of self-purification that represent the tradition of Balinese people and becomes a cultural identity. Currently, *melukat* has become a new tourist attraction in Bali, which is famous as spiritual tourism. At the same time, tourism plays a vital role in supporting the preservation of the tradition. Responsible tourism helps raise global awareness, educates visitors about Balinese values, and strengthens cultural identity. This study aims to preserve the cultural heritage by documenting the existing lexicon used during the *melukat* procces. In addition, this research describes the lexical meaning, and cultural meaning on ritual of *melukat* as well as the syntactic structure. The method used in this research is a descriptive explanatory method in qualitative form. The data source in this research is taken from the book of *melukat* ritual by Arwati (2005) which was chosen because it contains a lexicon about *melukat* ritual needed in the study. The data were obtained by using the direct techniques in the form of observation and documentation. The lexical and cultural meanings were identified in this study based on word forms and phrase forms, while the syntactic structure identify based on the phrase and clause structures. The result shows that there was lexicon which classified into noun, verbs, adjective and adverb. The syntactic structure was found in the form of basic word

order SVO, SOV, and VSO. By preserving *melukat* as spiritual tourism wisely, Bali can protect the environment and ensure the living tradition continues to thrive for future generations.

Kata kunci*:* Balinese ritual, language documentation, lexicon, syntactic

Abstract

Abstrak: Melukat merupakan praktik spiritual penyucian diri yang merepresentasikan tradisi masyarakat Bali dan menjadi bagian dari identitas budaya mereka. Saat ini, melukat telah berkembang menjadi salah satu daya tarik wisata baru di Bali yang dikenal sebagai wisata spiritual. Pada saat yang sama, pariwisata memiliki peran penting dalam mendukung pelestarian tradisi tersebut. Pariwisata yang bertanggung jawab dapat meningkatkan kesadaran masyarakat global, memberikan edukasi kepada wisatawan mengenai nilai-nilai budaya Bali, serta memperkuat identitas budaya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melestarikan warisan budaya dengan mendokumentasikan leksikon yang digunakan dalam proses melukat. Selain itu, penelitian ini mendeskripsikan makna leksikal dan makna budaya dalam ritual melukat, serta struktur sintaksisnya. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif eksplanatif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Sumber data penelitian berasal dari buku mengenai ritual melukat karya Arwati (2005), yang dipilih karena memuat leksikon terkait ritual melukat yang diperlukan dalam penelitian. Data diperoleh melalui teknik langsung berupa observasi dan dokumentasi. Makna leksikal dan makna budaya dalam penelitian ini diidentifikasi berdasarkan bentuk kata dan bentuk frasa, sedangkan struktur sintaksis diidentifikasi berdasarkan struktur frasa dan klausa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ditemukan

sejumlah leksikon yang diklasifikasikan ke dalam kategori nomina, verba, adjektiva, dan adverbia. Struktur sintaksis yang ditemukan berupa pola dasar urutan kata SVO (Subjek–Verba–Objek), SOV (Subjek–Objek–Verba), dan VSO (Verba–Subjek–Objek). Dengan melestarikan melukat sebagai bentuk wisata spiritual secara bijaksana dan bertanggung jawab, Bali dapat menjaga lingkungan sekaligus memastikan bahwa tradisi yang masih hidup tersebut terus berkembang dan diwariskan kepada generasi mendatang.

Keywords : *Ritual Bali, Dokumentasi bahasa, leksikon, sintaksis*

INTRODUCTION

Balinese society is well-known for its strong cultural and spiritual traditions, one of them is the *melukat* ritual. *Melukat* is a purification ceremony performed to cleanse the body, mind, and spirit using *tirta* (holy water). In recent years, *melukat* has gained increasing global interest and has developed into a form of spiritual tourism in Bali (Sutawa, 2012). This development not only attracts visitors seeking for healing and experience the spiritual things but also has a positive impact on the preservation of Balinese cultural heritage. Through responsible tourism, the tradition of *melukat* can be maintained while educating visitors about Balinese values, beliefs, and ritual practices (Cole & Morgan, 2010).

Language plays an important role in ritual practices because cultural knowledge, beliefs, and values are transmitted through linguistic expressions. In the context of language documentation, the analysis of ritual lexicon requires the understanding of both literal and contextual meanings to have depth point of view. Literal meaning refers to the basic, conventional semantic meaning of a word as generally understood by speakers, while contextual meaning refers to meaning that emerges from cultural beliefs, spiritual concepts, social interaction, and situational use (Yule, 2020), In addition to meaning, the structure result something different because the

arrangement of words in ritual expressions reflects cultural norms which cause a uniqueness in syntactic form. Therefore, documenting both types of meaning and syntactic structure are essential to preserve not only the linguistic form but also the cultural worldview embedded in ritual language.

Language documentation is a linguistic approach focusing on creating a lasting record of endangered or culturally significant languages, including recordings, transcriptions, and analyses of linguistic use in natural settings (Himmelmann, 2016). Ritual language often transmitted orally and experienced cultural shift and modernization, so the documentation is very essential for safeguarding intangible heritage. Schreyer (2022) stresses that documentation efforts must prioritize cultural sensitivity, community ownership, and sustainable access. Pradhan (2023) adds that the integration of digital tools and education has made documentation more participatory, involving younger community members in revitalizing traditional language knowledge. Language documentation is vital for preserving linguistic diversity, cultural identity, and traditional knowledge systems, particularly those expressed through ritual language and sacred practices.

Several studies have examined Balinese rituals and spiritual tourism. Arwati (2005) documented the procedures and components of the *melukat* ritual, but the study did not focus on linguistic elements. Suryatini (2015) analyzed the lexical structure of Balinese Hindu mantras and found that ritual language contains symbolic meanings shaped by cultural and spiritual beliefs. The study emphasized how sacred lexicon contributes to cultural identity and continuity. Adnyani and Pastika (2016) focused on documenting endangered Balinese ritual expressions and demonstrated that linguistic documentation supports the preservation of local wisdom, especially among younger generations who are gradually losing familiarity with traditional ritual terms.More recent research by Windia (2018) explored Balinese purification ceremonies as cultural identity in the globalization era. In the field of spiritual tourism, Pitana and Gayatri (2017) explored the development of spiritual-based tourism in Bali and showed that rituals such as *melukat* have become cultural attractions that motivate visitors seeking spiritual experiences. Their findings

highlight the need for cultural sensitivity and accurate information to avoid commodification. Meanwhile, Wijana (2018) examined contextual meaning in Balinese ceremonial speech acts and revealed that meaning in ritual language is often metaphorical and context-dependent, thus requiring cultural interpretation beyond literal translation. Putra (2020) investigated local participation in preserving *melukat* as spiritual tourism, showing that community involvement is crucial in maintaining authenticity, safeguarding ritual values, and ensuring that tourism development aligns with cultural preservation. However, research on language documentation that specifically analyzes the lexicon, literal meaning, contextual meaning, and syntactic structure of *melukat* is still limited. Thus, this study fills a research gap by focusing on documenting the linguistic aspects of *melukat* in relation to its cultural context. Although several studies have investigated Balinese rituals and spiritual tourism, limited research focuses specifically on the linguistic documentation of *melukat* as a ritual practice. This research fills the gap by providing lexical data and syntactic analysis relevant to the ritual discourse.

This study aims to document the lexicon used in the *melukat* ritual and describe both its literal and contextual meanings, as well as its syntactic structures. By analyzing the linguistic elements of *melukat*, this research supports cultural preservation, strengthens local identity, and contributes to the understanding of how language functions in traditional Balinese rituals, particularly in the era of spiritual tourism.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach supported by a descriptive-explanatory method to describe and interpret linguistic aspects of the *melukat* ritual. The data source is taken from the book *Upacara Melukat* by Arwati (2005). This study applies two main theories. The analysis of meaning is based on Yule's (2020) semantics theory, which distinguish between literal (conceptual) meaning and contextual (cultural) meaning. Meanwhile, the analysis of syntactic

structure refers to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) theory to examine the sentence patterns. Data collection techniques include observation and documentation. Observation involved examining the structure of ritual language and contextual use of lexicon in the ritual performance. Documentation focused on identifying lexicon and related expressions found in the text. The data were analyzed in three stages: (1) classification of lexicon according to word categories, (2) identification of lexical and cultural meanings, and (3) analysis of syntactic structure based on phrase and clause patterns. Lexical meaning was examined through dictionary definitions and contextual use, while cultural meaning was interpreted based on Balinese Hindu philosophical and ritual functions. Syntactic analysis focused on word order patterns found in phrases and clauses used in ritual discourse.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The *melukat* ritual has lexicon categorized into four major word classes namely nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The classification of these lexical items is essential not only for understanding their grammatical functions, but also for uncovering the cultural knowledge encoded within the *melukat* ritual. Each word class contributes uniquely to the construction of meaning: nouns identify sacred objects and ritual elements, verbs describe ceremonial actions performed by the participants, adjectives express spiritual states or qualities associated with purity and morality, while adverbs emphasize the manner in which the ritual should be carried out. By examining these categories, the study provides a systematic overview of the linguistic components that shape the ritual discourse of *melukat* and highlights how language serves as a medium for conveying spiritual values and cultural identity.

Levinson (2017) states that meaning depends on speaker intention, listener, interpretation, and situational context. Modern linguistic theory continues to distinguish between literal and contextual meaning, but with expanded views influenced by cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and cultural linguistics**.** The newest perspectives emphasize how the human mind, culture, and situational use shape meaning. According to Evans (2019), literal meaning refers to the basic, direct, and

dictionary definition of a word or expression. According to Yule (2020) Contextual meaning refers to the meaning a word gains based on the situation, culture, speaker intention, and how the word is used in real communication. It includes implied, symbolic, emotional, and culture-specific meanings.

Table 1. Lexicon in *Melukat* Ritual

No.	Category	Lexicon	Meaning
1.	Nouns	*Tirta, banten, pancoran, sudamala*	Holy water, offerings, water spout, ritual cleansing
2.	Verbs	*Melukat, ngaturang, nyembah, ngresikin*	To purify, to offer, to pray, to cleanse
3.	Adjectives	*Suci, satwika, leteh*	Pure, virtuous, spiritually impure
4.	Adverbs	*Mawiguna, sujana*	Beneficial, wisely

Nouns are dominant due to their function in naming ritual objects and sacred concepts. Verbs indicate ritual actions, reflecting stages of the cleansing process. Adjectives describe spiritual states, while adverbs explain manner and purpose of ritual actions.

The noun found in melukat ritual that commonly used by the society are *tirta, banten, pancoran* and *sudamala*. Each noun carry literal meaning and cultural meaning. *Tirta* is a noun which has literal meaning as holy water. The cultural meaning of *tirta* is the sacred water empowered through prayer and rituals; used for spiritual cleansing, purification of body and soul, removal of negative energy (*leteh*), and restoring balance. *Banten* has literal meaning as offerings while their cultural meaning of ritual is offerings made from flowers, leaves, food, and symbolic items. They serve as a form of devotion to the divine, expressing gratitude and asking for blessings during *melukat*. *Pancoran* means water spout but in cultural term, it refers

to a sacred spot where water flows from a spring or temple fountain. Each *pancoran* is believed to have different spiritual functions, such as cleansing negative aura, healing illness, or balancing energy. *Sudamala* known generally as one of the ritual cleansing in Bali. It has a purification concept meaning "removal of impurities." Refers to the process of cleansing spiritual impurities (*mala*) to return someone to a state of purity (*nirmala*).

The verbs found in ritual melukat also carry two meanings. They are literal meaning and cultural meaning. There are four main verbs used repeatedly in *melukat* process. Those verbs are *melukat, ngaturang, nyembah* dan *ngeresikin*. The lexicon *melukat* is a verb which has literal meaning as to purify and cultural meaning as the main ritual act of cleansing with holy water; symbolizes releasing negative energy, bad karma, and emotional or spiritual burdens to renew the soul. The lexicon *ngaturang* means to offer literally, but in cultural meaning it means the act of presenting offerings (*banten*) to God, ancestors, or holy spirits as a form of respect, devotion, and to request spiritual protection before and after *melukat*. The lexicon *nyembah* has literal meaning as to pray and the cultural meaning of *nyembah* is to worship or bow in prayer to the divine. During *melukat*, the participant prays for inner peace, spiritual cleansing, and guidance toward a balanced life. The lexicon *ngresikin* act as a verb which carry literal meaning to cleanse and cultural meaning as a ritual cleansing action usually done by a priest (*pemangku*) or spiritual guide. It involves sprinkling holy water, sanctifying the participant, and removing negative energies.

The adjectives found in melukat ritual are *suci, satwika*, and *leteh*. The lexicon *suci* has literal meaning as pure meanwhile the cultural meaning of *suci* is a state of spiritual and physical cleanliness achieved after *melukat*. Purity here is associated with inner peace and alignment with divine energy. The lexicon *satwika* means virtous and culturally means as a positive spiritual quality, referring to a clear mind, wisdom, calmness, and good moral character. After purification, a person is expected to achieve a *satwika* state. The last one is lexicon *leteh* which means as impure and the cultural meaning of this lexicon refers to spiritual dirt or impurity caused by

negative thoughts, actions, energy, bad karma, illness, or emotional disturbance. *Melukat* aims to remove *leteh*.

There are two adverbs found in melukat ritual which carries philosophical and spiritual meaning. They are *mawiguna* and *sujana*. The lexicon *mawiguna* mainly means as benefical and culturally means emphasizes that the ritual is performed for a useful, meaningful, and positive spiritual purpose to improve one's life and personal well-being. The other one, the lexicon *sujana* means wisely and carry cultural meaning as suggests performing rituals with awareness, respect, understanding, and good intention. *Melukat* must be done properly and consciously, not merely as a trend or tourist act.

Syntactic Structure in *Melukat* Ritual

The syntactic analysis of utterances used in the *melukat* ritual reveals three dominant word-order patterns, namely **SVO**, **SOV**, and **VSO**. The example of syntactic structure in melukat ritual can be seen as follows:

1. Ibu Bapa ngaturang banten pejati (Arwati, 2005: 14)
   (The parents offer the banten pejati)

Ibu Bapa	**ngaturang**	**banten pejati**
parents	*offer*	complete offering
Subject	*Verb*	Object

2. Diri leteh ring jero resikin (Arwati, 2005: 22)
   (Cleanse the inner impurities of the self)

Diri	**leteh ring jero**	**resikin**
self	*impure inside*	cleanse
Subject	*Object*	Verb

3. Asung Hyang pangraksa (Arwati, 2005: 35)

(Grant divine protection)

Asung	**Hyang**	**pangraksa**
grant	*divine*	protection
Verb	*Subject*	Object

The use of different syntactic patterns in the *melukat* ritual language reflects not only linguistic variation but also the spiritual and cultural functions embedded in the ritual. The SVO (Subject–Verb–Object) structure, such as in *"Ibu Bapa ngaturang banten pejati"* (Arwati, 2005: p.14), serves a narrative and informative function. This structure presents actions clearly and directly, making it suitable for describing ritual procedures or instructions. It is commonly used by ritual leaders (*pemangku*) to communicate steps that must be carried out by the participants. Because of its clarity, the SVO form aligns with modern Balinese syntax and is frequently used in daily and ceremonial instructions to ensure the ritual actions are correctly performed.

The SOV (Subject–Object–Verb) pattern, exemplified in *"Diri leteh ring jero resikin"* (Arwati, 2005: p.22), carries a reflective and traditional function in ritual language. This structure places emphasis on the object of purification (*ring jero* – the inner self) before the action, highlighting what needs to be purified. In ritual contexts, the SOV form reflects older Balinese and *kawi* influences, often used to emphasize the state of the subject before transformation**.** Thus, the structure deepens the spiritual significance by drawing attention to the impurity that is being removed rather than to the action of cleansing itself. This pattern reinforces introspection and self-awareness, which are central to spiritual purification.

Meanwhile, the VSO (Verb–Subject–Object) structure, as seen in *"Asung Hyang pangraksa"* (Arwati, 2005: p.35), performs a sacred, poetic, and invocative function. By foregrounding the verb, this pattern places immediate focus on the sacred request or command, making the utterance sound more respectful, solemn,

and mantra-like. VSO is typically found in mantras and supplications directed toward divine beings, where the structure enhances the spiritual atmosphere and ritual solemnity. The placement of the verb at the beginning elevates the sentence into a form of spiritual invocation, demonstrating humility, reverence, and the ceremonial tone appropriate for addressing the divine.

CONCLUSION

The *melukat* ritual represents a significant element of Balinese cultural heritage, deeply rooted in spiritual and linguistic traditions. This study documents the lexicon used in the ritual, demonstrating that ritual vocabulary consists of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs with both lexical and cultural meanings. Syntactic analysis shows the presence of SVO, SOV, and VSO patterns, suggesting a specialized ritual language structure. each syntactic structure plays a unique role in conveying meaning during the *melukat* ritual: SVO delivers clear instruction, SOV emphasizes the inner spiritual focus of purification, and VSO elevates the expression into a sacred invocation. Together, these patterns enrich the linguistic texture of the ritual and strengthen the cultural depth and spiritual experience of *melukat*.

Language documentation of the *melukat* ritual is essential for safeguarding cultural heritage, particularly as the ritual gains increasing visibility within the sphere of spiritual tourism. Responsible tourism plays a strategic role in cultural continuity by encouraging visitors to develop understanding, appreciation, and respect for Balinese philosophical values and ritual practices. Documenting the linguistic elements of *melukat*—such as ritual lexicon, expressions, and syntactic patterns—ensures that future generations inherit not only the ceremonial procedures, but also the spiritual wisdom, worldview, and cultural identity embedded within the ritual language. Moreover, language used in ritual contexts is highly susceptible to change, simplification, or even loss when exposed to commercialization and cross-cultural interactions. As younger generations shift toward modern lifestyle and global languages, traditional ritual expressions risk being forgotten or replaced, creating a gap in cultural transmission. Systematic language documentation therefore serves

as a protective measure to maintain the authenticity, sacredness, and integrity of ritual discourse. Through continuous documentation, revitalization, and educational efforts, the intangible knowledge encoded in *melukat* language remains accessible, meaningful, and sustainable amid social change and global influences. Ultimately, preserving the linguistic aspect of *melukat* strengthens cultural resilience and reinforces Balinese identity in both local and global contexts.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

Adnyani, N. L. S., & Pastika, I. W. (2016). *Documentation of Balinese ritual expressions to preserve local wisdom*. Udayana University Press.

Arwati, N. M. (2005). *Tata cara upacara melukat*. CV Kayumas Agung.

Cole, S., & Morgan, N. (2010). *Tourism and inequality: Problems and prospects*.

Evans, V. (2019). *Cognitive linguistics: A complete guide*.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014). *An introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.).

Pitana, I. G., & Gayatri, P. G. (2017). Spiritual tourism development in Bali: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Tourism and Culture, 12*(2), 45–58.

Pradhan, U. (2023). Language, artificial education, and future-making in Indigenous language documentation. *International Journal of Educational Linguistics, 8*(3), 77–93.

Putra, I. N. (2020). Community participation in preserving Melukat as spiritual tourism in Bali. *Journal of Cultural Sustainability, 5*(1), 62–74.

Schreyer, C. (2022). The risk of “taking urgent steps”: Linguistic diversity and the politics of language documentation. *Journal of Language and Communication, 42*(2), 145–160.

Sharifian, F. (2017). *Cultural linguistics: Cultural conceptualizations and*

language.

Suasta, P., & Connor, L. (1999). *Religion, ritual and tourism in Bali*.

Suryatini, N. N. (2015). Lexical structure of Balinese Hindu mantras. *Linguistika, 22*(1), 14–27.

Sutawa, G. (2012). Issues on Bali tourism development and community empowerment. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

Wijana, I. D. (2018). Contextual meaning in Balinese ceremonial speech acts. *Journal of Language and Culture, 10*(3), 101–112.

Windia, W. (2018). *Local wisdom of purification rituals in Balinese culture*.

Yule, G. (2020). *The study of language* (8th ed.).