



The Cultural Meaning of Lexicons in “Ngusaba Bukakak” Ritual in Giri Emas Village

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ABSTRACT

One of the endangered traditions in Indonesia is the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual in Giri Emas Village, North Bali, which is a biennial agricultural ceremony dedicated to Dewi Sri, the goddess of fertility. Therefore, this study focuses on the identification, description, and interpretation of the lexicon used in the ritual to reveal its cultural meaning and contribution to Balinese identity. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with ritual experts, and document analysis using a qualitative design framed by linguistic ethnography. Informants were selected using snowball sampling, which included the Traditional Village Head, Village Stakeholders, and Banten Serati, who had in-depth knowledge of ritual language. With triangulation ensuring data validity, the analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The results of this study revealed that there are seventy lexicons spread across twelve stages of the ritual, including offerings, sacred objects, ritual actions, dances, and spiritual processions. These lexicons embody philosophical principles such as Tri Hita Karana which expresses harmony with God, society, and nature. This study concludes that the ritual lexicon functions as a linguistic element and as a cultural carrier that maintains Balinese identity, where its preservation is important for cultural sustainability, intergenerational transmission, and the protection of intangible heritage.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Wahyudi (2017), Indonesia is home to extraordinary linguistic and cultural diversity, with more than 652 regional languages spread throughout the archipelago. Meanwhile, Cohn and Ravindranath (2014) stated that the

dominance of the national language and the influence of globalization, modernization, and digital communication in Indonesia are increasing, so the richness of this language is facing erosion. This is very visible in Bali, where the younger generation increasingly chooses to use Indonesian and global languages such as English, which contribute to the decline of traditional languages and lexicons that are deeply embedded in cultural and religious practices (Dewi et al., 2020). A society's cultural heritage and worldview are reflected in its language, which serves as more than just a means of communication (Budasi et al., 2021). According to Utama and Luardini (2021), such a shift can threaten the sustainability of languages and the preservation of cultural identity, especially in ritual contexts that rely heavily on certain ceremonial languages.

Ngusaba Bukakak is one of the rituals that reflects the richness of Balinese customs, more precisely this ritual is practiced in Giri Emas Village, North Bali. According to Sudika (2019), every two years during Purnama Kedasa, this agrarian-based ritual is carried out as a form of devotion and gratitude to Dewi Sri or can be called the goddess of fertility. The core of this ritual is a unique lexicon such as terms such as Ngembang, Agengne, and Sarad which not only indicate certain ceremonial objects or actions, but also contain deep-rooted philosophical and spiritual meanings that come from the principles of Tri Hita Karana. Tri Hita Karana is harmony with God or Parahyangan, harmony with nature or Palemahan, and harmony with fellow humans or Pawongan (Sukarma, 2016; Widanti, 2022).

According to Budasi et al. (2023), Acquiring knowledge of the lexicon is essential for maintaining language and preventing the loss of word meaning. This ritual lexicon is increasingly foreign to the younger generation in Giri Emas, despite its cultural significance. Judging from initial observations and interviews with religious leaders, this study revealed that only ritual experts such as Bendesa Adat, Pemangku Desa, and Serati Banten understand these terms. This raises serious concerns about the potential extinction of the ritual language. This linguistic gap between the older and younger generations underscores the critical need for documentation and analysis to ensure intergenerational transmission and cultural resilience (Erawati et al., 2023; Pradhana & Simpen, 2012).

Although there have been previous studies related to Ngusaba Bukakak such as those conducted by Justiasta (2015), Purna (2019), and Suwirya et al. (2022), previous studies have only focused on the procedural and symbolic aspects of the ritual. Previous studies have not explored in depth the lexicon itself or its cultural meaning. Also, there are other studies that have analyzed the lexicon in various Balinese rituals and traditions such as those conducted by Budasi & Suryasa (2021), Putra et al. (2023), and Dewi et al. (2020), but none of their studies have specifically focused on the context of Ngusaba Bukakak. Thus, this creates a scientific gap and an opportunity to make new contributions by highlighting this ritual lexicon as an important carrier of linguistic, spiritual, and ecological knowledge.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify, describe, and interpret the lexicon used in the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual from cultural perspective. Framed by an ethnolinguistic approach, this study not only enriches the documentation of endangered lexicons but also emphasizes the role of ritual language in preserving Balinese identity. The integrated focus on language, culture, and spirituality through the lens of a specific and under-researched ritual tradition in Giri Emas Village is the novelty of this study. Also, a broader discussion on language maintenance, cultural sustainability, and revitalization of intangible heritage in the context of contemporary socio-cultural transformation is also contributed to this study. The innovation of this research lies in the integration of linguistic and ethnographic methods to highlight how language functions in sacred ritual systems, which link ceremonial speech, traditional ecological knowledge, and intergenerational transmission. Furthermore, this research offers local and universal contributions such as preserving fading linguistic heritage and illustrating the broader value of ritual lexicons in maintaining cultural identity in the face of global homogenization by situating the research in the cultural landscape of Giri Emas Village.

METHOD

To explore the lexicon used in the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual in Giri Emas Village, this study uses a qualitative research design with a linguistic ethnography approach. Linguistic ethnography was chosen because of its ability to examine the relationship between language and culture, focusing on how the lexicon specific to the ritual reflects Balinese cultural identity and spiritual values. This approach allows researchers to observe and interpret the symbolic and linguistic aspects of the ritual. This allows for an in-depth analysis of the cultural meanings behind each term used.

Giri Emas Village, Buleleng Regency, Bali was the location of this research. This village consistently holds the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual which is held every two years on Purnama Kedasa, so this location is very suitable to be chosen. Participants who participated in this study were selected using snowball sampling techniques. Bendesa Adat, Pemangku Desa, and Serati Banten were three informants identified based on their expertise and roles in the ritual. Samarin (1967) became the guideline adapted as a special criterion for selecting informants in this study, where the special criteria included mother tongue ability, activeness in ritual practices, age 35 years and above, openness, and a deep understanding of the cultural context of the ritual. One informant acted as the main informant, while the other two informants acted as supporting informants.

The object of this study is focused on the identification and interpretation of the lexicon used in all stages of the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual, especially its cultural meaning. There are two types of data collected, namely primary data and secondary

data. Primary data consists of verbal explanations and visual documentation obtained through interviews and direct observation. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from published texts, such as books, journal articles, previous research, and cultural documentation relevant to Balinese rituals and linguistic practices.

Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews. Observations were conducted during the implementation of the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual, where the researcher participated in the ritual and recorded verbal and non-verbal interactions. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted with informants that the researcher had selected and the interviews were conducted using Balinese to improve understanding and accuracy. Then, these interviews were transcribed, translated into English, and analyzed qualitatively. If there was any missing data or clarifying responses, follow-up interviews were conducted to complete them. The interviews conducted in this study aimed to obtain the literal meaning of the lexicon, its cultural, symbolic, and ritual significance.

Human and technical equipment are the instruments used in the data collection process. During the research, the researcher acted as the main instrument, responsible for observing, recording, interpreting, and analyzing data. Supporting instruments such as semi-structured interview guides, voice recorders, and mobile phone cameras were used to ensure systematic information collection. The interview guides contained open-ended questions focused on lexicon identification and analysis. Meanwhile, a voice recorder was used after obtaining prior consent from the participants to ensure the accuracy of verbal data. Also, mobile phone cameras were used to visually document objects and ritual stages and provide contextual support for linguistic analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. At the data collection stage, all relevant information was collected through interviews, observations, and visual documentation that had been carried out. Next is the data reduction stage, important themes were categorized to highlight patterns of meaning and irrelevant or repetitive data had to be filtered. Then, the data was displayed in narrative and tabular form that allowed researchers to interpret emerging relationships and symbolic implications. Finally, through repeated data checks to ensure consistency and reliability, researchers drew conclusions and verified them.

This study applied triangulation to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from three different informants selected by the researcher, while technique triangulation involved integrating data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. This multi-pronged approach minimized bias and allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the lexicon used in the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual. Furthermore, all ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process.

Furthermore, verbal consent was obtained from each informant prior to data collection. When documenting rituals and sacred symbols, the researcher ensured cultural sensitivity and respect. Participation was voluntary, and the data collected was treated with confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. The Lexicons Found in Ngusaba Bukakak Ritual

The findings of this study indicate that the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual in Giri Emas Village contains a rich set of vocabulary reflecting cultural, spiritual, and linguistic traditions. This vocabulary comprises 12 ritual stages, from the purification process at sea to the closing ceremony. Each stage contributes a unique set of terms referring to sacred objects, offerings, ritual actions, and symbolic expressions.

Table 1. Identification of Lexicon at Each Stage of the Ngusaba Bukakak Ritual

No	Procedures	Lexicons
1.	<i>Meliis/Mekiis ring segara</i>	<i>Prelingga/Pretima, Sarad-sarad, Tombak, Senjata Nawa Sanga, Umbul-umbul, Baleganjur, Tedung.</i>
2.	<i>Ngusabha nini</i>	<i>Ngusaba ring pura ampelan, Ngusaba ring pura panti, Ngusaba ring pura gaduh, Ngaturang banten ring carik, Prasita durmengala, Pras Pengulapan.</i>
3.	<i>Nuntun</i>	<i>Banten Pemedak, Peras pejati</i>
4.	<i>Menekang Dangsil lan Penjor</i>	<i>Ngemedalang Gong duwe, Gong Duwe, Penjor, Dangsil tumpang 7,9, lan 11.</i>
5.	<i>Ngusaba ring pura dalem lan pura segara</i>	<i>Banten ngulat ngambe bebangkit</i>
6.	<i>Gedene/Agengne</i>	<i>Mendak ida bhatara bhatari ring pura gunung sekar, Ratu Pajenengan, Banten pejati, Banten gebogan, Banten Ajuman/Rayunan, Banten Pengambean Segehan Agung, Kulkul bulus, Nuntun ida bhatara bhatari, Ngaryanin Tari pependetan, Tari Rejang dewa, Tari Rejang teratai, Tari Rejang sari.</i>
7.	<i>Mebat Tedun Krama</i>	<i>Lawar</i>
8.	<i>Melayagin Bukakak</i>	<i>Canang Sari, Pasepaan, Canang pangulapan, Pengulapan, Japitunggal, Sesayut, Penyakcak, Pengrebuan, Ketutunan, Tipat akelan, Tulung urip, Tulung Sangkul, Nasi Taksu, Banten</i>

	<i>Guling, Peras, Jerimpen Tengteng, Sarad ageng, Celeng selem, Bukakak.</i>
9. <i>Melis ring Pura Pancoran Emas</i>	<i>Sarad Alit, Pengogong, Nunas Tirta, Tirta wangsuhpada, Bija Kuning.</i>
10. <i>Mejaya-jaya ring pura gunung sekar</i>	<i>Ngider ping telu murwa daksina, Ngusung Sarad Ageng, Ngiringang ida bhatara bhatari melancaran ring pura subak suralepang, Melancaran/Mesananjaan, Sarad Ngider, Bekel Melancaran.</i>
11. <i>Ngiringang ida melancaran ring pura subak suralepang</i>	<i>Banyuwangan, Banten Suci, Daksina.</i>
12. <i>Ngigelang plaus</i>	<i>Sampyan Plaus/Petengas, Banten Aapan</i>

Table 1 above shows that the lexicon is not evenly distributed across the ritual stages. Certain stages, such as Melayagin Bukakak and Gedene/Agengne, contain the largest cluster of specialized terms. These involve elaborate offerings, dances, processions, and statues, reflecting their role as the most complex and symbolically rich parts of the ritual. In contrast, stages such as Ngusaba ring Pura Dalem lan Pura Segara and Mebat Tedun Krama are characterized by a smaller lexicon, but their vocabulary still holds significant meaning within the ritual sequence.

Nearly all of these findings highlight several semantic domains within the lexicon. Sacred objects are represented by terms such as Prelingga, Pretima, and Ratu Pajenengan, which denote divine embodiment and spiritual authority. Offerings, including Banten Gebogan, Banten Guling, and Lawar, symbolize fertility, prosperity, and gratitude. Ritual actions are expressed through verbs such as Nuntun, Melancaran, and Ngider Ping Telu, which describe sacred movements and processions. Likewise, religious symbols such as Sampyan Plaus and Tirta Wangsuhpada emphasize purification, blessings, and cosmic balance. Thus, the lexicon serves to guide ritual practice, preserve oral traditions, and ensure the transmission of spiritual values across generations.

2. The Cultural Meaning of Lexicon in the Ritual of “Ngusaba Bukakak”

The findings of this study reveal that there are seventy lexicons representing various aspects of the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual in Giri Emas Village, rich in language and culture. These lexicons function as ritual objects or practices and contain deep cultural meanings that reflect the Balinese philosophy of harmony between humans, nature, and God. Each lexicon carries symbolic values that can be categorized into offerings, sacred objects, ritual practices, sacred dances, and spiritual processions, all of which demonstrate the close integration of language, culture, and religious beliefs within the community.

The community's deep spiritual devotion is highlighted in the lexicon associated with offerings (banten). For example, Banten Aapan expresses gratitude to ancestral

spirits, while Banten Ajuman serves as a medium for praying to God for specific needs such as healing, prosperity, or marriage. Offerings such as Banten Gebogan and Banten Guling contain philosophical meanings rooted in the teachings of Tri Kaya Parisudha and the sublimation of worldly desires. Furthermore, Banten Jerimpen symbolizes the cosmic balance between the Sun and the Moon, while Banten Ngulap Ngambe Bebangkit symbolizes spiritual awareness. These findings illustrate that offerings function both as material sacrifices and as symbolic expressions of harmony, purification, and devotion.

Sacred objects also play a central role. For example, the Daksina symbolizes the divine presence in every ritual, while the Tedung serves as a sacred umbrella emphasizing spiritual dignity and defense. Objects such as the Prelingga and Pretima serve as physical manifestations of the gods, enabling spiritual communication between the community and the divine powers. Furthermore, the Nawa Sanga Weapons and Spears provide protection and cosmic balance, further emphasizing the belief that rituals serve as a medium for maintaining harmony between the sekala (real world) and niskala (unseen world).

Several lexicons are associated with the ritual practices and processions that make up the Ngusaba Bukakak ceremony. Practices such as Mebat Tedun demonstrate collective cooperation and solidarity through communal cooking, while Mekiis ring Pura Pancoran Emas symbolizes spiritual purification. Processions such as Mendak Ida Bhatara-Bhatari and Ngiringang Ida Bhatara-Bhatari Melancaran depict sacred hospitality, where the gods are invited and guided with respect. Other rituals, such as Ngider Ping Telu Murwa Daksina and Ngusung Sarad Ageng, represent the cosmic cycle, harmony, and agricultural significance of the ritual. Furthermore, these findings also demonstrate the importance of sacred dances as spiritual offerings. For example, Tari Rejang Dewa, Tari Rejang Sari, and Tari Rejang Teratai are performed not for entertainment but as acts of devotion to the gods, symbolizing purity, the essence of life, and spiritual enlightenment. These dances highlight the integration of art, religion, and communal participation in Balinese ritual life.

This research identifies lexicons that reflect the agricultural and communal focus of the rituals. Rituals such as Ngusaba ring Pura Empelan, Pura Gaduh, and Pura Panti emphasize gratitude for water, fertile soil, and abundant harvests, in line with the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. Ngaturang Banten ring Carik demonstrates the farmers' personal devotion directly to their rice fields, reinforcing the sacredness of agriculture. The culmination of the ritual is Melayagin Bukakak, which is the highest form of devotion, uniting symbols of nature, animals, and the divine presence to affirm the community's gratitude for fertility and prosperity. The research shows that the 70 lexicons used in the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual are more than just linguistic elements, because they convey Balinese cultural identity. They illustrate how the ritual language reflects the community's worldview, integrating religious devotion, agricultural life, and social solidarity into a single ceremonial framework. The Ngusaba Bukakak ritual

becomes a religious practice and a living expression of cultural values, social cooperation, and spiritual philosophy in Giri Emas Village through these lexicons.

Discussion

The lexicon identified in the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual is a linguistic element and serves as a carrier of cultural identity and symbolic meaning. In research conducted by Nissan (2017) and Andini et al. (2023), the lexicon reflects the richness of language by encompassing the natural, cultural, and spiritual environments of a community. In the Balinese context, 70 lexicons were found in this study, ranging from sacred objects such as the Banten Suci and Sarad Ageng to ritual actions such as Ngusung and Ngider Ping Telu Murwa Daksina, which reveals how language is deeply embedded in ritual practices. This finding aligns with Semana and Menggo (2022), whose research emphasizes that cultural rituals cannot exist without language, as language serves as the primary medium for conveying sacred knowledge.

The ethnolinguistic role of these lexicons becomes particularly evident in the Melayagin Bukakak stage, where Sarad Ageng and Celeng Selem transform into Pelinggih Bukakak. This illustrates that terms such as "Bukakak" are not merely names, but rather symbols of fertility, sacrifice, and ancestral blessings in the Balinese agrarian belief system. This research aligns with research conducted by Lihawa (2012), who noted that language among the Gorontalo people reflects their cultural worldview. Furthermore, research conducted by Aridana et al. (2024) demonstrated how the Metajen lexicon of the Karangasem people preserves cultural identity through cockfighting terms. Thus, the Ngusaba Bukakak lexicon functions as an ethnolinguistic artifact that connects the community's worldview with their ritual practices.

The research results also show that the lexicon used in Ngusaba Bukakak embodies the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which emphasizes harmony between humans and God (Parahyangan), humans and others (Pawongan), and humans and nature (Palemahan) (Sukarma, 2016). In the Parahyangan aspect, lexicons such as Pretima, Tedung, Banten Suci, and Tirta Wangsuhpada reflect devotion to God through offerings, sacred symbols, and purification rituals. This is supported by Gombo (2024) who emphasized that ritual practices function as an expression of gratitude to God for the maintenance of community life.

In the Pawongan aspect, lexicons such as Mebat Tedun Krama and Bekel Melancaran demonstrate how rituals encourage cooperation and social solidarity through the preparation, cooking, and distribution of shared food. This finding aligns with research conducted by Milla et al. (2024), where they found that unity and collective responsibility are prioritized in community rituals, strengthening social bonds. In the Palemahan aspect, lexicons such as Ngusaba Nini, Penjor, and Bukakak symbolize the community's respect for fertility, agriculture, and ecological balance. Environmental wisdom embedded in ritual practices is illustrated in the use of natural materials such as bamboo, coconut leaves, and flowers. This aligns with Milla et al.

(2024), who observed that rituals in other contexts also utilize natural materials without damaging the ecosystem, such as the Tombstone Pulling Ritual. Thus, the Ngusaba Bukakak lexicon is a linguistic unit and symbol that maintains ecological harmony.

The deeper cultural meaning of the Ngusaba Bukakak lexicon is shaped by beliefs, symbolic interpretations, and community practices that have been passed down through generations. Research conducted by Stibbe (2015) explains that language encodes how communities view their relationships with nature, God, and each other. For example, the word Bukakak is not only a ritual object, but also a cultural symbol of fertility and agricultural prosperity. Furthermore, research conducted by Abdullah (2016) emphasizes that symbolic meanings are passed down orally and through experience across generations. This finding is reinforced by research conducted by Lestarina (2018), which shows that the vocabulary of the Sedulur Sikep wedding tradition contains meanings inherited through life experiences. This is also in line with research conducted by Pandani et al. (2022), which documented the Dayak Jalai ritual lexicon as a heritage preserved through intergenerational transmission.

The preservation of these lexicons in Giri Emas Village demonstrates how ritual language functions as a cultural archive. Layers of Balinese knowledge and identity risk being lost without the continued use of these terms. This research aligns with Suwirya et al. (2022), who observed that traditional ceremonies remain sustainable because villagers uphold their customs, the continued implementation of Ngusaba Bukakak ensures the lexicons are protected for future generations. These findings also align with broader ethnolinguistic research, which confirms that cultural rituals preserve a society's intangible heritage through its unique vocabulary and symbolic practices. Thus, the Ngusaba Bukakak lexicons demonstrate how language is more than just a means of communication, which serves as a medium for maintaining identity, conveying sacred values, and preserving cultural philosophy.

CONCLUSION

Through its 70 lexicons, this study concludes that the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual in Giri Emas Village embodies a rich ethnolinguistic system, functioning as both ritual vocabulary and as a carrier of cultural identity and spiritual meaning. Each lexicon reflects the Balinese worldview, which connects religious devotion, social solidarity, and ecological awareness. It illustrates how ritual language goes beyond literal meaning to embody concepts of fertility, gratitude, and communal cooperation in words such as Bukakak, Penjor, and Mebat Tedun Krama. These findings confirm that ritual lexicons play a crucial role in preserving the Balinese philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, which ensures harmony with God (Parahyangan), with fellow human beings (Pawongan), and with nature (Palemahan). Furthermore, this study demonstrates that ritual language serves as a medium for cultural transmission, maintaining collective memory and identity across generations. In the

context of global cultural change, documenting and interpreting these lexicons is crucial for the preservation of intangible heritage. This study highlights the urgency of protecting these ritual vocabularies, as their loss would result in linguistic erosion and the loss of the cultural and spiritual knowledge embedded within them.

This study demonstrates that the Ngusaba Bukakak ritual lexicon is more than just a linguistic expression, but rather a living symbol of Balinese cultural resilience. The Giri Emas community can maintain its traditions and contribute philosophically to broader discourses on cultural and ethnolinguistic sustainability by preserving and revitalizing these ritual languages. Furthermore, integrating these lexicons into digital archives or cultural tourism initiatives can serve as a preservation strategy and a means to promote local identity in a global context. Going forward, these findings may open up opportunities for broader application.

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