



## The Use of Person Deixis in Balinese: A Social-Cognitive Perspective on Honorifics in the Balinese Folktale *Ni Bawang teken Ni Kesuna*

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**Abstract.** *This research explores the use of person deixis in the Balinese language, with a particular focus on the honorific system as a form of social interaction. Person deixis not only reflects the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor but also serves as a key mechanism for expressing social status, age, and emotional closeness. This research addresses the question: Does the choice of deictic forms involve specific cognitive processes, such as the assessment of social status, politeness, and situational context? Beside that, this research also discuss what factors most influence the choice of personal pronouns used in dialogue? Employing a descriptive-qualitative approach and analyzing data from Balinese narrative texts, this article examines how the selection of deictic expressions engages complex cognitive mechanisms. The findings reveal that the use of honorifics is not merely a linguistic practice but also influences speakers' patterns of thought in interpreting and evaluating social relationships. These results support the notion that language and thought are closely interconnected, and that the structure of the Balinese language cultivates a high degree of social sensitivity in its speakers from an early age.*

**Keywords:** *Balinese Language; Folktale; Honorifics Terms; Person Deixis; Social Cognitive*

### 1. BACKGROUND

Balinese, as one of the regional languages rich in grammatical systems, including the use of personal deixis and honorific forms, has its own complexities in its spoken practice. In the Balinese folk tale “*Ni Bawang teken Ni Kesuna*”, there are differences in the use of words that have the same meaning but are pronounced differently by each character or participant in the dialogue. So, this phenomenon raises a fundamental question: why, in the same communication situation, can the choice of words used differ? This issue forms the basis for examining the process of language form selection, which is not only linguistic but also related to the cognitive psychological aspects of the speaker.

Studies on language choice within the deixis and honorific systems are not only important for understanding linguistic structure but also contribute to the preservation of regional languages and cross-cultural understanding. In the social context of Balinese society, which still upholds the values of politeness and social hierarchy, the appropriate choice of words in speech is key to maintaining harmonious social interactions. Therefore, this research has practical and academic relevance in describing how psychological and cultural factors shape language patterns.

This research is based on a psycholinguistic approach, specifically the speech production theory, which explains that every utterance produced by a speaker is the result of

mental processes in the brain. Additionally, Levinson's deixis theory and Brown and Gilman's honorific theory are used to examine how social identity and interpersonal relationships influence word choice in communication. By combining linguistic and psycholinguistic approaches, this research seeks to explore the mental processes behind the selection of deixis and honorific forms in the Balinese language.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the use of persona deixis in the context of honorifics in Balinese folk tales, as well as to explain the psychological factors that influence the selection of these forms. Specifically, this research aims to uncover the relationship between the social background of characters and the forms of speech they use. Its significance lies in its contribution to a deeper understanding of the interaction between language structure, local culture, and cognitive processes, as well as its application in the fields of regional language education and applied linguistics.

Previous studies have examined deixis and honorifics in several regional languages such as Javanese and Sundanese, but few have delved deeply into them from a psycholinguistic perspective, particularly in Balinese. This research builds upon and expands previous research by focusing on traditional narratives that contain strong social and cultural contexts. Unlike purely structural analyses, this research integrates cognitive factors into the language-use process.

Most previous studies have tended to discuss deixis and honorifics from a grammatical or sociolinguistic perspective, but few have linked them to the mental and psychological aspects of the speaker. This is the gap that this research attempts to fill, namely by combining a psycholinguistic approach with cultural discourse analysis through traditional Balinese manuscripts. This research also presents primary data from original manuscripts that have rarely been analyzed before.

The main hypothesis of this research is that the choice of personal deixis in the story “*Ni Bawang taken Ni Kesuna*” is influenced by the social status of the characters and the cognitive mental processes that consider Balinese cultural norms of politeness. The secondary hypothesis states that honorific forms are used inconsistently, depending on the speaker's psychological perception of the interlocutor. Both hypotheses are formulated based on speech production theory and a psycholinguistic framework regarding social perception and language.

One controversial hypothesis raised is that in some cases, deixis and honorific forms do not fully reflect rigid social structures but instead indicate linguistic flexibility influenced by emotional or personal affiliations between characters. This hypothesis challenges the

conventional view that language is a direct reflection of social hierarchy and opens the possibility of personal intent influencing language form selection.

## **2. THEORY**

Theoretically, this research studies in the field of regional languages by presenting real examples of the use of deixis and honorifics in the Balinese cultural context. Practically, the results of this research can serve as a reference in the development of Balinese language learning curricula, cross-cultural communication training, and language preservation through a cognitive-based approach. This research can also serve as a foundation for further studies on the relationship between language, thought, and culture.

Referring to previous studies, there have been many studies discussing personal deictics, both in terms of honorific forms and the factors that influence them in various discourse contexts. These studies have made important contributions to expanding our understanding of how personal deictics are used to indicate social relationships, the speaker's position, and communication strategies employed in various situations. As such, these previous studies serve as relevant and significant references in supporting and strengthening the theoretical foundation and analysis of this research, particularly in examining the phenomenon of personal deictics, which is the primary focus of this research.

Person deixis clearly operates on a basic three-part division, exemplified by the pronouns for first person ('I'), second person ('you'), and third person ('he', 'she', or 'it'). In many languages these deictic categories of speaker, addressee, and other(s) are elaborated with markers of relative social status (for example, addressee with higher status versus addressee with lower status). Expressions which indicate higher status are described as honorifics (Yule, 1996).

Kridalaksana (in Lisnawati, 2008) defines that psycholinguistics is an interdisciplinary science, namely psychology and linguistics. Psycholinguistics studies the relationship between language and human behavior and reason. Psycholinguistics studies how psychological processes occur when someone utters sentences that they hear when communicating and how language skills are acquired when communicating. Psycholinguistics includes cognitive processes that can produce sentences that have meaning and are grammatically correct from vocabulary and grammatical structures, including processes that make expressions, words, and so on understandable.

As a new, autonomous discipline, psycholinguistics has its own field of study or scope of discussion. In this regard, Yudibrata et al. (in Hasan, 2018) stated that psycholinguistics

includes language acquisition, the relationship between language and the brain, the influence of language acquisition and language mastery on the intelligence of thinking, the relationship between encoding (coding process) and decoding (interpretation/meaning of the code), the relationship between language knowledge and language use and language change).

According to Grosjean (1982:125), language choice is influenced by four main factors: the situation and setting, the participants in the interaction, the topic of conversation, and the function of the interaction. In addition, psycholinguistic studies indicate that language choice is also affected by other factors such as the speaker's and listener's proficiency, age, social status, the closeness of relationships, ethnic background, social pressure, and contextual setting. For example, a person tends to use the language they are most fluent in, adjust their language to match the listener's, use a second language as a symbol of social identity, or speak a particular language only within the home due to external pressures.

In their research entitled "Person Deixis in Mata Najwa's Discourse: A Pragmatic Study," Enny Hidajati and Debby Ayu Zanatia (2021) found that the forms of person deixis used by Najwa Shihab as the host have an important pragmatic function in building social relationships and creating a formal or familiar communicative atmosphere with the interlocutor. From the four episodes analyzed, it was found that first-person deictic expressions (such as I, we, us) were used to show respect and involve the interlocutor collectively, second-person deictic expressions (such as you, sir, ma'am, bro, sis) reflect respect for the age, social status, or profession of the interlocutor, and third-person deictic forms (such as -nya, mereka) are used to refer to third parties being discussed.

According to Rini Yuni Astuti and Agung Prabowo (2024) in their research entitled "Deixis Persona in Short Stories in Panjekar Semangat Magazine, April to June 2022 Editions, and Its Implications for Learning Short Stories in High School" Person deictics in Javanese, both formal and informal varieties, appear in free and bound forms, encompassing first, second, and third persons. The use of these forms is greatly influenced by social contexts such as status, age, and conversational situations, and functions as a reference marker for the speaker, addressee, or third party. This finding confirms that the selection of deictic forms in short stories is not only linguistic in nature but also reflects the norms of politeness and social structure of Javanese society.

Several previous studies were used as references in this research because they provide a general overview of the use of personal deictics and honorific aspects in various contexts. However, what distinguishes this research from previous references is its main focus on analyzing the reasons behind the differences in the use of Balinese language by speakers, even

though the meaning conveyed is actually the same. This research highlights the factors that influence the choice of language forms, which are inseparable from the cognitive processes in the minds of speakers. In other words, before speech is uttered, a complex mental process takes place that involves social, cultural, and situational considerations, so that the choice of words used reflects the thoughts that have been consciously processed by the speaker when communicating.

### 3. METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative design with a psycholinguistic approach. The main focus of this research is to identify and analyze forms of personal deictics and honorific expressions in the Balinese folk tale *Ni Bawang teken Ni Kesuna*, as well as to examine the psychological factors that influence the use of these language forms. This design was chosen because it is appropriate for the exploratory and interpretive nature of the research on natural language data taken from written sources. Through this approach, researchers can understand the meaning of utterances in cultural and social contexts and relate them to the mental processes underlying the language choices of the characters in the story.

Data collection in this research was conducted using literature review and indirect observation methods. Primary data was obtained directly from written texts, namely the folk tale *Ni Bawang teken Ni Kesuna* by Putu Amoreta Devi, published by PWII Bali in 2004. This story was chosen because it is rich in cultural content and linguistic elements, particularly in the use of language levels and honorific forms that reflect the social status differences among the characters. As a traditional narrative reflecting the social norms and values of Balinese society, this text serves as an authentic and contextual data source for analyzing language behavior within a psycholinguistic framework. Data collection was conducted using passive participant observation techniques with a note-taking method. The researcher systematically recorded utterances containing personal deictic forms and honorifics from the text. Data collection was conducted using purposive sampling, which involved selecting only the parts of the text relevant to the focus of the study. In addition, instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, or pre/post-tests were not used because the data analyzed was sourced from written text, not direct participant responses.

Data analysis was conducted by combining the matching method and the distributional method. The matching method was used to identify and interpret the referents of the deictic forms found. The sub-technique used was providing determining elements technique, which was used to determine and classify expressions that functioned as deictics. To interpret the

meaning of each deictic expression, the pragmatic matching sub-technique was applied. Additionally, analysis of language level usage was conducted by highlighting honorific and psycholinguistic aspects related to the social and cognitive perceptions of the speaker. The distributional method was applied through direct element division technique to break down linguistic data into smaller units so that their forms and functions could be identified. The paraphrasing technique was also used to support the analysis by re-explaining the analyzed expressions to clarify their meanings. This is important for understanding the social and cognitive implications of language form selection in the context of the story.

The presentation of results is done using an informal method, which involves explaining findings in everyday language without technical symbols or formal formulas (Sudaryanto, 1993). Additionally, the results are also presented formally in the form of tables containing classifications of personal deictic expressions, honorific forms, and psycholinguistic factors that influence their use. This dual presentation aims to ensure that the research results can be understood by both linguistic academics and general readers interested in cultural and linguistic studies.

#### **4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

In this research, found seven deictic expressions in the Balinese narrative text "*Ni Bawang taken Ni Kesuna*", which can be analyzed through social cognitive. These expressions, *Ni Bawang*, *Ni Kesuna*, *Meme*, *Cening*, *Nyai*, *Mbok*, and *Titiang* represent personal deixis used by speakers or characters in the text to refer to themselves or others in ways that are contextually, socially, and psychologically meaningful. Social cognitive perspective allows researchers to explore not only the linguistic form of these expressions but also the underlying cognitive and social factors that influence why a particular expression is chosen during spoken interaction or dialogue. These choices are not random but are motivated by considerations such as the speaker's social role, relationship with the interlocutor, cultural norms, emotional state, and communicative intent. Thus, the analysis of these deictic terms provides insight into how language use is shaped by mental processes and sociocultural expectations within Balinese society.

**Tabel 1.**Deictic expressions in the folk tale Ni Bawang taken Ni Kesuna

<b>Deictic Expression</b>	
1	Ni Bawang
2	Ni Kesuna
3	Meme
4	Cening
5	Nyai
6	Mbok
7	Titang

*Source: Data Adapted from Mayuni, 2025*

In this section, the research findings will be described in depth by analyzing each deictic expression found in the folk tale Ni Bawang taken Ni Kesuna. The analysis is based on a psycholinguistic approach that considers various cognitive and sociocultural factors that influence the choice of language forms by the characters in the story. The explanation will focus on how and why certain deictic forms are used by each character, as well as the meaning and implications of such usage in the context of social relationships, age, speech purpose, conversation atmosphere, and norms of politeness. By discussing each expression in detail, this section aims to show the relationship between language structure and mental processes in producing socially and culturally appropriate speech.

#### **Deictic Expression ‘Ni Bawang’**

*Ni Bawang: Me, me ne tiang Ni Bawang!*

*‘Bu, Bu ini saya Ni Bawang!’*

*‘Mom, mom it's me, Ni Bawang!’*

*Meme: Ning, ape ne ning, ngudiang beboron abe ning mulih?*

*‘Nak, apa ini nak, kenapa kamu bawa binatang pulang?’*

*‘Bawang, what is this? Why did you bring an animal home?’*

In the data above, there is a conversation between two people, namely Meme and Ni Bawang. When talking to Meme, Ni Bawang refers to herself by her own name. Analyzed using a psycholinguistic approach, the relationship between Ni Bawang and Meme is a child and mother. So, the use of deictic expressions (names) is due to the ends factor (speech purpose). In the story, Meme has two children, Ni Bawang and Ni Kesuna, so in the dialogue, Ni Bawang refers to herself by her own name because her speech purpose is to indicate that the person speaking/present at that time is Ni Bawang. Thus, Meme understands and the speaker's purpose is achieved. Besides ends factor, the choice of the deictic expression ‘Ni Bawang’/mentioning one's own name is influenced by the scene factor (conversational atmosphere). The atmosphere in the above dialogue is that Meme does not know who is

approaching her at that moment, and Ni Bawang aims to convey to her mother that it is her who is coming, not someone else.

The name 'Ni Bawang' in Balinese also has a meaning. 'Ni' in Balinese culture is a prefix for naming women, and 'Bawang' in Indonesian culture means onion, which has a spicy and pungent taste. Therefore, the name 'Ni Bawang' is used for a woman with unpleasant characteristics. This is related to the participant factor in the interaction within the ethnic background context.

#### **Deictic Expression 'Ni Kesuna' & 'Cening'**

*Meme: Ye, wenten napi cening, adin ceninge dija?*

*'Ye, ada apa Nak, adikmu dimana?'*

*'Hey, what's up, kid? Where's your sister?'*

*Ni Bawang: Ni Kesuna sing nyak nulungin titiang megae, tiang kalaina melali*

*'Ni Kesuna tidak mau membantu saya bekerja, saya ditinggal jalan-jalan'*

*'Ni Kesuna won't help me with my work, she left me to go out'.*

The conversation above shows a dialogue between Meme and Ni Bawang, who have a mother-daughter relationship. Meme does not mention Ni Bawang by her name, but by the term Cening. This is due to the degree of their relationship. In Balinese, 'Cening' is a term used to refer to a child. Furthermore, Ni Kesuna is mentioned by Ni Bawang as the second person in the dialogue. Ni Bawang, who has a sibling relationship with Ni Kesuna, does not refer to Ni Kesuna as 'Adik' (sister), but only by name, influenced by the scene and age factors. In the context of the dialogue, Ni Bawang is complaining to her mother that Ni Kesuna refuses to help her. Thus, the choice of the deictic expression "Ni Kesuna" is motivated by Ni Bawang's emotional state and her older age compared to Ni Kesuna, so she does not need to replace it with a term of respect.

The name Ni Kesuna in Balinese also has a meaning. 'Ni' in Balinese culture is a prefix for naming women and Kesuna means garlic, which does not have a spicy or pungent taste like onions. So, Ni Kesuna is portrayed as a kind character.

#### **Deictic Expression 'Nyai' & 'Meme'**

*Ten sue wusan punika, Ni Kesuna sampun teked di jumahne. Raris memene nigtig ipun tur ngraos sada brangas*

*'Tidak lama setelah itu, Ni Kesuna sudah sampai di rumahnya. Lalu ibunya memukulnya dan berkata agak keras'*

*'Not long after that, Ni Kesuna arrived home. Then her mother hit her and said rather harshly'*

*Meme: megedi nyai, lek meme ngelah pianak buka nyai. Mua jegeg, solah jele, megedi nyai!*

*'Pergi kamu, malu ibu punya anak seperti kamu. Wajah cantik, perbuatan jelek, pergi kamu!'*

*'Go away, I'm ashamed to have a child like you. You have a pretty face but you behave badly, go away!'*

*Ni Kesuna raris tengkejut sawireh ipun nenten uning napi mawinan memene bendu sareng ipun*

*'Ni Kesuna lalu terkejut namun dia tidak tau apa yang menyebabkan ibunya kesal dengan dia'*

*'Ni Kesuna was surprised, but she didn't know what had made her mother angry with her'.*

The situation above illustrates that Ni Kesuna had just arrived home when her mother immediately spoke to her. In the dialogue, Meme refers to herself by her own name. Meme's deictic expression is used because it is influenced by the degree of their relationship. The relationship between Ni Kesuna and Meme is that of mother and child, so the word Meme is used when talking to Ni Kesuna, who is her child. Furthermore, the deictic expression Nyai used by Meme is influenced by scene (atmosphere of speech) and the tone of the conversation. In the above situation, Meme was angry and disappointed with Ni Kesuna. The deictic expression used was based on emotion. Therefore, the deictic expression Nyai was used, which in Balinese is a pronoun for women and is classified as coarse language.

#### **Deictic Expression 'Mbok' & 'Titiang'**

*Ni Kesuna: Mbok. Titiang jagi mesahin lan masiram akidik di tukade, mbok jagi sareng?*

*'Kak. Saya mau mencuci dan mandi sedikit di sungai, kakak mau ikut?'*

*'Sis. I want to wash and bathe a little in the river, do you want to come with me?'*

*Ni Bawang: Sing, mbok kal pules malu, nah nyanan mbok nyusul!*

*'Tidak, kakak mau tidur dulu, ya nanti kakak nyusul!'*

*'No, I'm going to sleep first, I'll catch up with you later!'*

*Raris Ni Kesuna memargi ka tukade*

*'Lalu Ni Kesuna berangkat ke sungai'*

*'Then Ni Kesuna went to the river'.*

The conversation took place between Ni Kesuna and Ni Bawang. According to the script, Ni Kesuna is Ni Bawang's younger sister, who is kind and patient. The deictic expression

Mbok was used by Ni Kesuna to address Ni Bawang, who is her older sister. This was influenced by the age factor of the participants in the interaction. In Balinese, the deictic expression Mbok means older sister and is generally used by younger people to address older people. Beside that, the use deictic expression Mbok is influenced by speech norms. The speakers in this dialogue are aware of the norms of speech, as a sign of respect when speaking to someone who is older.

The use of the word Titiang, also uttered by Ni Kesuna, is a first-person pronoun for herself. This is also influenced by the participants in the interaction, including age. Ni Kesuna, who is the younger sister of Ni Bawang, chooses the deictic expression Titiang as a pronoun for herself, rather than using other Balinese deictic expressions or mentioning her own name. In Balinese, the choice of the deictic expression ‘Titiang’ is classified as the most polite level of language as a sign of respect. In other words, the person who uses the deictic expression ‘Titiang’ positions themselves below the person they are talking to. This is also influenced by Ni Kesuna's personality, which is different from Ni Bawang's. Therefore, this is also influenced by the speaker's ability. Ni Kesuna has the ability to speak in refined Balinese. This is inherent in her nature. The influence of norms (speech norms) also plays a role in the choice of the deictic expression Titiang. Ni Kesuna is aware of the rules for uttering speech, so she chooses the most refined expression to speak to someone older.

**Tabel 2.**Deictic expressions with influencing factors

No	Deictic Expression	Factor
1	Ni Bawang	- Ends factor (speech purpose). - Scene factor (conversational atmosphere)
2	Ni Kesuna	- Scene factor (conversational atmosphere) - Age factors
3	Meme	- Degree of relationship
4	Cening	- Degree of relationship
5	Nyai	- Scene factor (conversational atmosphere) - Tone of the conversation
6	Mbok	- Age factor - Speech norms
7	Titiang	- Speaker's ability - Speech norms

*Source: Data Adapted from Mayuni, 2025*

**Table 3.**Number of language choice factors

Amount	
Ends factor (speech purpose)	1
Scene factor (conversational atmosphere)	3
Degree of relationship	2
Tone	1
Age factor	2
Speech norms	2
Speaker's ability	1

*Source: Data Adapted from Mayuni, 2025*

From the table above, there are 7 deictic expressions found, and there are 7 psycholinguistic factors that influence language choice. On average, language choice is influenced by age and the relationship between participants in the dialogue. However, the most influential factor is the scene factor (conversational atmosphere). The story of Ni Bawang taken Ni Kesuna is a Balinese folk tale about two siblings with different personalities. Ni Bawang is portrayed as hot-tempered and cunning, while Ni Kesuna is portrayed as kind-hearted and polite. Therefore, there are several factors that influence language selection in this dialogue. The participants in the dialogue consist of 3 characters, namely Meme, Ni Bawang, and Ni Kesuna. Each participant uses different deictic expressions to refer to themselves or their conversation partner, depending on the conversational atmosphere, the relationship between the participants, their age, and many other factors that influence the dialogue.

As shown in the table, there is one deictic expression influenced by the ends factor (speech purpose), three deictic expressions influenced by the scene factor (conversational atmosphere), two deictic expressions influenced by the degree of relationship, one deictic expression influenced by tone, two deictic expressions influenced by age factors and speech norms, and one deictic expression influenced by the speaker's ability. The reason why the scene factor (conversational atmosphere) most influences deictic expressions in dialogue depends on who is speaking to whom and based on what is happening in the dialogue, such as a tense and serious atmosphere that dominates the atmosphere in each dialogue, so that each participant utters deictic expressions that refer to themselves or their interlocutors and third parties, using words that they have processed according to these factors and then uttered.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This research discusses the use of personal deictics in Balinese from a psycholinguistic perspective, with a particular focus on the honorific system in the folk tale Ni Bawang taken Ni Kesuna. Based on the analysis of seven forms of deictic expressions, namely Ni Bawang, Ni Kesuna, Meme, Cening, Nyai, Mbok, and Titiang, this research shows that the choice of language forms used by characters in the story is influenced by a number of psycholinguistic factors such as age, social relationships, norms of politeness, conversation atmosphere, speech purpose, and speaker ability. This research shows that the deictic forms in the story are not chosen randomly, but are the result of complex mental processes and social considerations. The most dominant factor influencing the choice of deictic forms is the scene factor or conversation atmosphere. This indicates that the emotional and situational context in a dialogue plays an important role in the speech production process. The results of this research support the

hypothesis that language and thought are closely related, and that the structure of the Balinese language helps shape the social sensitivity of its speakers from an early age. In addition, this research reinforces the theory that the choice of language forms not only reflects rigid social structures, but also demonstrates linguistic flexibility influenced by personal perceptions and emotional affiliations between characters. Thus, this research contributes to the study of psycholinguistics of regional languages and has practical implications for the preservation of the Balinese language, culture-based language teaching, and cross-cultural understanding. These findings are expected to serve as a foundation for further research on the relationship between language, culture, and cognition.

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