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# Implementing the Input Hypothesis in Designing Balinese Language Learning Intake for First-Grade Elementary School Students

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#### **Abstract:**

The input hypothesis is a fundamental concept in language learning, stating that the teaching materials used must be above students' current linguistic competence during the learning process. This shows the importance of comprehending the Balinese language competence of first-grade elementary school students as a reference for learning. Therefore, this study aimed to map out the competence of first-grade elementary school students as a reference for selecting and grading Balinese language learning intake at the higher grades and educational levels. The study procedures were carried out by collecting data in a semi-naturalistic setting over 2 months from first-grade students at Elementary School 3 Paksebali, Klungkung, and Elementary School 1 Alasangker, Buleleng. The data obtained were then analyzed using descriptive-qualitative analysis. The results showed Balinese language repertoire of first-grade students had idiosyncrasies as distinguishing features. These idiosyncrasies were found in phonological, lexical/semantic, morphological, and syntactic aspects as references. Based on the results obtained, language learning with the input hypothesis could be applied critically and consistently.

**Keywords**: The Input Hypothesis; Intake; Linguistic Competence; Idiosyncrasies of Students' Balinese Language.

#### **Introduction:**

According to Bali Governor Regulation Number 20 of 2013 and Bali Province Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2018, Balinese language is a mandatory local content subject across all types and levels of education in Bali. Several studies showed that an essential framework to consider for the effective acquisition of Balinese language was the input hypothesis (Krashen, 2009; Burton-Roberts & Spencer, 1993; Parnaningroem, 1990). In addition, the hypothesis states that language proficiency development is facilitated when individuals receive linguistic input slightly above the current level of competence, often denoted as "i + 1" (Baradja, 1990). To

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operationalize this hypothesis, it becomes imperative to initially assess the linguistic proficiency of first-grade elementary school students, who represent novice students of Balinese language. By understanding their current competence, Balinese language teachers can craft instructional materials tailored to their specific needs through careful selection and sequencing (Arnawa, 2008; Hamied, 1987). Despite the potential, a significant challenge persists as, to date, there has been no systematic mapping of Balinese language proficiency among first-grade students. Consequently, teachers often experience obstacles in the development of appropriate teaching materials. This situation shows the pressing necessity to undertake a comprehensive mapping of Balinese language proficiency among first-grade elementary school students. The endeavor is further justified by the principles of meaningful language acquisition, which emphasize addressing students' communicative requirements (Kaswanti-Purwo, 1991).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, age emerges as a decisive factor in language variation (Sumarsono, 2007). Among children, language variation manifests as idiosyncrasies in the standard language framework. Idiosyncrasies observed in Balinese language among first-grade students reflect their linguistic competence. Conceptually, these idiosyncrasies signify variations in linguistic expression commonly used by children. Rather than being perceived as errors, these differences are recognized as Balinese language variants, particularly emblematic of children's language usage. In addition, idiosyncrasies serve as essential developmental language features in children that necessitate consideration when formulating instructional approaches, rendering Balinese language learning meaningful for novice students. When juxtaposed with Balinese language variants spoken by adults, it becomes evident that students' Balinese language variants constitute developmental manifestations (Tarigan & Tarigan, 1988; Brown, 2005). Aside from serving as developmental manifestations, Balinese language idiosyncrasies can be interpreted as inherent traits of language acquisition in children (Sutama, 1990), thereby warranting significant attention in instructional design as part of the implementation of the input hypothesis.

In line with previous studies, the input hypothesis offers a valuable framework for understanding the language acquisition process. This hypothesis states that children's language proficiency naturally advances when exposed to input slightly beyond their current linguistic competence. For instance, concerning syntactic development, children typically operate in pivot grammar structures, with an average sentence length of three words and various reductions. Consequently, these individuals benefit most from exposure to straightforward sentences incorporating appropriate functors. By providing input slightly above their current competence level, children can effectively comprehend and assimilate language. However, it is important to acknowledge that the progression of Balinese language acquisition among children is not uniform due to disparities in language environments. Addressing this challenge necessitates offering authentic communicative experiences, such as designing learning environments that replicate natural language settings, enabling students to absorb language unconsciously (Schutz, 2019).

Several studies showed that the input hypothesis presented a contrasting viewpoint to the structural approach, stating that language learning commenced with the mastery of grammar, followed by the application in communication. Meanwhile, the input hypothesis suggests that language acquisition begins with grasping meaning, followed by the acquisition of grammatical structures (Chaer, 2003). This perspective is consistent with the psycholinguistic view that language proficiency evolves from an understanding of semantic components (Maksan, 1993) facilitated by extralinguistic factors, such as accompanying gestures. Consequently, the input hypothesis is in line with the notional-communicative approach, which emphasizes the significance of contextualized language usage in conveying meaning (Parera, 1987). According to the input hypothesis, the efficacy of language learning is dependent on the comprehensibility of the input provided to students. Enhancing students' comprehension comprises simplifying the linguistic structures used by adult speakers while adhering to the "i + 1" principle. This shows the criticality of teachers possessing an understanding of their students' proficiency in Balinese language, enabling them to effectively design instruction to match their needs. The current study aims to aid teachers by providing data on Balinese language

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proficiency of first-grade elementary school students. Describing the linguistic competency of students serves as a foundational step in the continual refinement and adaptation of instructional materials for higher educational levels.

Previous studies investigating the implementation of the input hypothesis in language learning, conducted by various experts, yielded empirical evidence supporting the efficacy. Parnaningroem (1990) explored the role of input in classroom settings in second language acquisition. The report demonstrated that interactions in the target language, employing simplified speech patterns by teachers, effectively enhanced children's language proficiency. These results showed the importance of language teachers making formal adjustments and modifying speech structures to facilitate effective communication with students. Similarly, Ainin (2021) examined Arabic language learning through the lens of the input hypothesis, revealing 2 crucial aspects, namely the gradual introduction of Arabic by teachers and the design of teaching materials tailored to students' needs. These insights emphasized the essential role of students' linguistic competence as a guiding principle in language instruction in line with the core tenets of the input hypothesis. In addition, Sutrisna (2021) reported the integration of Krashen's theory in developing English teaching materials at the university level. The study revealed that the careful selection of teaching materials positively contributed to enhancing students' English language skills, with a focus on catering to natural abilities and requirements. Similar studies conducted in various countries provide further support for the efficacy of the input hypothesis. White (1987) reported the importance of students comprehending input in extralinguistic contexts for effective language acquisition. However, teachers must recognize that the speech patterns of adults differ from those of children, necessitating adjustments to match the characteristics of children's language. Revopa (2004) conducted a nine-month testing period on the input hypothesis among English students in the Czech Republic. The results demonstrated that understood input significantly contributed to improving English language proficiency among students in this context. Moreover, Maharsi (2011) stated the significance of input and interaction in second language acquisition, particularly in shaping children's language output. These studies collectively reaffirmed the importance of the input hypothesis in informing language instruction practices and facilitating effective language learning outcomes.

In addition to supportive viewpoints, various studies offer critical perspectives on the input hypothesis. Liu (2015) delineated 3 critical perspectives, including the conceptual ambiguity of understood input, input simplification, and exaggerated claims. These critical perspectives aim not to discredit the input hypothesis but rather to refine certain aspects. Another critical perspective is presented by Bailey and Fahad (2021), which argued that while the input hypothesis offers a coherent explanation of language acquisition processes, there is room for expanding its scope by incorporating multimedia and technology. Therefore, teachers have the responsibility of continually mediating and inspiring students, transforming the abstract concept of the input hypothesis into tangible applications that resonate in socio-cultural contexts and specific moments during language acquisition.

Considering both supportive and critical perspectives on the input hypothesis, it remains important to consider this hypothesis for teaching Balinese language. Therefore, it is essential to characterize Balinese language proficiency of first-grade elementary school students as novice students. This phase serves as the foundation for developing comprehensive plans for ongoing Balinese language education, integral to Balinese language preservation, enhancement, and nurturing initiative, as stipulated by Bali Province Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2018.

#### II. Literature Review:

Arnawa (2016) reported the shift in Balinese language vocabulary in the agricultural domain, focusing on sociolinguistic variables, such as age, gender, and agricultural activities. The results showed that first, there was a difference between understanding and usage of Balinese language vocabulary in the agricultural domain

by adult male and female speakers. Based on the data, 81.43% of adult male speakers could understand the meaning of agricultural domain vocabulary, but only 44.29% actively used the language. Second, 61.43% of adult female speakers understood the meaning of agricultural domain vocabulary, but only 37.14% actively used it. Third, only 18.57% of male adolescents claimed to understand agricultural domain vocabulary, but only 7.14% could use it actively. Fourth, 21.43% of female adolescents understood the meaning of agricultural domain vocabulary, but only 8.57% actively used it. In addition, the data description could be interpreted as an indication of a decrease in the number of active Balinese language speakers in the adolescent age group. This language condition was reinforced by Awli (1998), stating that there had been a decrease in active Balinese language speakers. In addition, based on the 1980 population census, active Balinese language speakers were 1.69% and decreased to 1.64% in the 1990 census. The empirical data on the decrease in the number of active Balinese language speakers was addressed by Bali Provincial Government by designating Balinese language as a mandatory local content subject at primary and secondary education levels. Each primary and secondary education level in Bali Province must teach Balinese language for a minimum of 2 hours per week. To support the success of this program, curriculum design for Balinese language learning based on the input hypothesis was needed.

According to Krashen (2003), the input hypothesis relied on the natural order hypothesis, assuming that language acquisition occurred based on a linear order, namely 1, 2, and 3. This indicated that material 3 was mastered when students had understood material 2. In addition, material 2 was mastered well when students had understood material 1. To arrange materials linearly, data on the linguistic competence position of students before the learning process was needed. Therefore, a description of linguistic competence must be mapped. In connection with Balinese language teaching program at primary and secondary education levels in Bali Province, and referring to the assumption of the input hypothesis, it was deemed necessary to map Balinese language competence of first-grade elementary school students. The data on Balinese language competence of first-grade elementary school students could be used as a reference for designing teaching materials for students in grades 2, 3, and 4, until grade 12 at the upper secondary education level.

In line with previous studies, Sutrisna (2021) integrated Krashen's theory into English language learning in universities. The results showed that it was crucial to design English language learning naturally to foster communicative competence among students. Krashen's theory integrated was the input hypothesis. Similarly, Warmadewi and Mahayana (2021) reported that the mastery of English by local tour guides was triggered by the application of naturalistic and input hypotheses. Darihastining, et al. (2023) also reported that language acquisition by kindergarten students occurred through the implementation of the input hypothesis from Krashen's theory, supported by the imitation process. The application of Krashen's theory in Arabic language learning in Indonesia was reported by Mustofa, Astina & Rahman (2021). The results showed that Arabic language learning for students whose first language was Indonesian should include instruction and correction procedures for each material learned and experienced. Students who had difficulty pronouncing certain forms must be intensively monitored. This monitoring was necessary to observe the development of students' Arabic language. These last 4 studies proved that the input hypothesis could be referred to as one consideration in designing language learning materials, including Balinese language learning.

## III. Method:

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative design, and the required data included Balinese language characteristics of first-grade elementary school students. In connection with Saussure's dichotomy (1988), the data consisted of parole uttered by children in semi-naturalistic settings, and to obtain data, the designated subjects were first-grade students from Elementary School 3 Paksebali, Klungkung and Elementary School 1 Alasangker, Buleleng. The determination of the study locations referred to the results of pasamuan agung (Balinese Language Congress) in 1972, which declared both regencies as areas using the standard Balinese

language. Regarding the subjects, data was collected using the observe-involve-speak technique assisted by recording techniques (Sudaryanto, 1993; Djajasudarma, 1993), and to elicit data, subjects were engaged in traditional children's game settings. Additionally, to ensure qualitative data fulfilled transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria (Sugiyono, 2012, Miles & Huberman, 2014, Strauss & Corbin, 2003), the collection was conducted periodically over 2 months in various game settings. Furthermore, for triangulation purposes, data was also gathered from class teachers at each respective elementary school through interviews, and validated data was analyzed using the distribution and matching method while considering phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactic characteristics. With such procedures, the characteristics of first-grade elementary school students' Balinese language could be described, serving as a basis for Balinese language learning by implementing the input hypothesis.

#### IV. Results and Discussion:

Based on validated data, the characteristics of first-grade elementary school students' Balinese language could be identified into 4 groups which included phonological, lexical/semantic, morphological, and syntactic.

A. Phonological Characteristics of Balinese Language in First-Grade Elementary School Students

Phonetically, language sounds were divided into 2 groups which included vowels and consonants. Based on the data, first-grade students did not show idiosyncrasies in the pronunciation of Balinese language vowels, such as /a/, /i/, /u/, /é/, /o/, and /e/. This meant that all students could pronounce these vowels correctly and understandably, and their success in pronouncing these vowels was theoretically because children typically mastered vowels earlier than consonants. This mastery was due to vowels being sounds produced with articulation from the front part of the vocal tract, and this linguistic fact proved that systematically, children's phoneme mastery began with front sounds (Dardjowidjojo, 2000), and the validity of this theory was further supported by consonant sound data. Based on the data, students did not have difficulty pronouncing /p/, /b/, /m/, /n/, /t/, and /d/, and their success in pronunciation was because these consonants belong to the front sounds. Conversely, the data indicated that children generally had difficulty pronouncing /s/, /r/, and /k/, which were back consonant groups. When children were presented with a corpus containing these back consonants to be pronounced, children typically replaced it with more front, homorganic consonants, as shown in the following data:

/susu/ was pronounced as /cucu/ 'milk', from palatal to alveolar consonant,

/murid/ was pronounced as /mulid/ 'student', from fricative to alveolar consonant,

/buku/ was pronounced as /butu/ 'book', from glottal to alveolar consonant.

The replacement of consonant pronunciation seemed to use a fronting-homorganic strategy, namely replacing them with consonants that were articulated closer and positioned more forward. The pedagogical implication, by applying the input hypothesis explained that these phonological idiosyncrasies in Balinese language could be used as references for learning the standard pronunciation. Teachers could solidify training in Balinese language phonemes starting from those already mastered, both vowels and consonants, toward those not yet mastered, and from front phonemes to back phonemes. With such a design, the principle of language learning from easy to difficult could be effectively applied (Larsen-Freeman 2000; Burton-Roberts & Spencer, 1993).

B. Lexical/Semantic Characteristics of Balinese Language in First-Grade Elementary School Students

Balinese language vocabulary of first-grade students was highly diverse, making it difficult to generalize due to numerous influencing variables. Amid this complexity, the most prominent characteristic was children's failure to recognize specific semantic features as distinguishing characteristics between lexical. In this

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situation, children tend to overgeneralize, relying on common semantic features, as shown in the following data.

ngamah 'eat (for animals)'

morot 'gnaw'

Both words were action verbs that could be paired with the noun [+animate], such as with the noun 'bikul' meaning 'mouse,' forming the following sentences:

- (1) Bikulé ngamah pindang.

  mouse-detactive-eat salted fish 'The mouse eats salted fish'
- (2) Bikulé morot kasur.

mouse-detactive-gnaw Kasur 'The mouse gnaws the mattress'

Balinese language verbs 'ngamah' meaning 'eat' and 'morot' meaning 'gnaw' had different lexical semantic features. The verb 'ngamah' had the semantic feature [+swallow] while 'morot' had [-swallow]. The common semantic features of both verbs were [+action] and [+mouth]. When being visualized, both verbs appeared as follows:

First-grade students apparently cannot distinguish specific semantic features that differentiate between lexicals. Generally, students only grasp generic semantic features shared among lexical. Referring to the data above, both 'ngamah' and 'morot' had the semantic features [+action] and [+mouth]. Consequently, children perceived these 2 words as having the same meaning and interchangeable usage, thereby producing the following utterances:

Bikule ngamah sok.

Mouse-det active-eat basket

'The mouse eats the basket'

The correct form should be:

Bikule morot sok.

Mouse-det active-gnaw basket

Therefore, first-grade students generally engaged in overgeneralization due to their inability to think specifically. This aligned with the Gestalt psychology concept that general things were understood earlier than specific ones (Crider, et al., 1983).

Another example of overgeneralization was found in the use of the task words 'ajak' meaning 'with' and 'tekén' meaning 'by'. These 2 words were often interchanged in usage by first-grade students due to their shared generic semantic features. 'Ajak' had a hypernymic relationship with 'tekén', and this meant that 'ajak' encompassed the meaning of 'tekén', not vice versa, as illustrated in the following example:

(3) Icang tundéna mlajah ajak bapané.
 (4) Icang tundéna mlajah tekén bapané.

(5) 1-persona told-passive active-study by father-det

<sup>&#</sup>x27;The mouse gnaws the basket'

'I was told to study by my father'

(6) Icang maplalian ajak telu.1-persona active-play with three

'I play with three people'

The use of 'ajak' and 'tekén' could be exchanged as shown in sentences (3) and (4). However, in data (5), 'ajak' cannot be replaced by 'tekén', and such hypernymic semantic relationships triggered lexical overgeneralization in children.

The pedagogical implication in applying the input hypothesis was that teachers could use lexical/semantic idiosyncrasies of Balinese language among first-grade elementary school students as a reference for developing children's vocabulary. Teachers could grade vocabulary teaching materials from those with generic semantic features to those with specific semantic features and could select vocabulary from high-frequency to low-frequency usage. Furthermore, teachers could identify and classify children's register vocabulary, toward adolescents' register, then to adult speakers' register, and could also compare distinguishing semantic features between lexical by providing examples of their naturalistic usage. In this situation, teachers need to simplify semantics, and such vocabulary teaching material design was aligned with language learning principles (Parera, 1987; Baradja, 1990; Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

## C. Morphological Characteristics of Balinese Language in First-Grade Elementary School Students

According to the typology, Balinese language was agglutinative, meaning word formation involved the combination of free and bound morphemes. Agglutinative language was also known as an affixing language due to the abundant affix forms (Keraf, 1990). In addition to this, Balinese language had 24 affixes, consisting of 12 prefixes, 4 infixes, and 8 suffixes. Based on data, first-grade students could already use 5 prefixes, namely {N-}, {ma-}, {pa-}, {ka-}, and {a-}, with varying frequencies. Among these 5 prefixes, {N-} and {ma-} had very high usage frequencies, reaching up to 259 times, as seen in words like 'nyampat' meaning 'sweep', 'ngambar' meaning 'draw', 'mabalih' meaning 'watch', 'magending' meaning 'sing', while the prefixes {pa-}, {ka-}, and {a-} had very low usage frequencies, only 26 times, as seen in words like 'pangosok' meaning 'eraser', 'kasabat' meaning 'thrown', and 'abesik' meaning 'a'. With such data, in Balinese language register of children, the morphemes {N-} and {ma-} were productive prefixes, while {pa-}, {ka-}, and {a-} were categorized as unproductive. Furthermore, other bound morphemes that could be used by children were the suffixes  $\{-a\}$ ,  $\{-an\}$ ,  $\{-in\}$ ,  $\{-in\}$ ,  $\{-in\}$ , and  $\{-n\}$ , and out of the 8 suffixes used by children, 4 suffixes included {-a}, {-ang}, {-é}, and {-né} had relatively high usage frequencies totaling 390 times, as seen in words like 'ajaka' meaning 'invited', 'jemakang' meaning 'fetch', 'sampaté' meaning 'broom that', and 'kumisné' meaning 'its mustache', thereby classified as productive suffixes in the repertoire of students' Balinese language. Furthermore, the suffixes {-an}, {-in} had moderate usage frequencies totaling 127 times, as seen in words like 'tegehan' meaning 'higher' and 'tulisin' meaning 'write it', while the suffix {-n} had very low usage frequency, only 6 times, as seen in the word 'punyan' meaning 'that tree'. Based on the data of word formation, 11 affixes had not been used by children, namely prefixes {pra-}, {pari-}, {pati-}, {maka-}, {saka-}, {kuma-}, suffix {-ing}, infixes {-in-}, {-um-}, {-el-}, and {-er-}. The high usage frequency of prefixes {N-}, {ma-} and suffixes {-a}, {-ang}, {-é}, and {-né} was inseparable from their function. Prefixes {N-}, {ma-} and suffixes {-a}, {-ang} functioned as verb-forming, while suffixes {-é} and {-né} served as noun markers. Verbs and nouns were central elements in clause semantic structures, hence this aspect was mastered earlier by children. Data on the use of these affixes illustrated that the grammatical aspect of Balinese language in first-grade students was in a developing stage.

In connection with the input hypothesis, the pedagogical implication of describing the mastery map of morphological aspects of Balinese language in first-grade students was that teachers could design teaching of

Balinese language polymorphemic word formation, prioritizing the use of productive affixes that formed verbs and nouns with high usage frequency in Balinese language speech. The principle was from the most productive affixes to the productive ones, then to the unproductive ones. With this design, the i+1 principle conceptualized in the input hypothesis could be implemented in learning.

D. Syntactic Characteristics of Balinese Language in First-Grade Elementary School Students

Syntax was one of the important aspects of children's language and needed attention because the smallest unit of language usage was a sentence. Based on the data, the average sentence length (ASL) of first-grade students was 3.39 words. ASL indicated that the syntactic aspect of students' Balinese language was developing toward more complex sentence patterns. There were 2 main characteristics of students' Balinese language sentences, namely, inverted structure and ambiguity in active-passive construction. This constituted idiosyncrasies of Balinese language in first-grade students.

Inversion was one of the syntax patterns in Balinese language, but the inversion of syntactic functions must adhere to the rules. This was not the case in Balinese language register of first-grade students, where the inversion did not comply with the phrase structure principle, thereby categorized as idiosyncrasies, as illustrated in the following example.

(7) *Kucit icang sing ngubuh*.

Piglets 1-persona neg-do not akt-keep
'My piglets do not keep'

The phrase order in sentence (6) did not conform to the syntax pattern of Balinese language, hence, it cannot be categorized as an inversion sentence. The predicted core in sentence (6) was 'ngubuh' meaning 'keep', which was an active action verb, therefore, the arguments that functioned as themes or patients must follow the core predicate. The inversion pattern that adhered to the principle was like sentence (6a) below.

(6a) Sing ngubuh kucit icang.

neg-do not akt-keep piglets 1-persona

'Do not keep my piglets'

Based on such structural analysis and syntactic role, sentence (6) produced by children could be categorized as a form of syntactic idiosyncrasies in Balinese language.

Other syntactic idiosyncrasies were the ambiguity in active-passive construction, and the terminology of active and passive sentences was based on the semantic roles of their arguments. A sentence was stated to be in active construction when the agent argument was mapped as the subject and the patient argument was mapped as the object. Conversely, it was called passive construction when the patient argument was mapped as the subject and the agent argument was mapped as the object. However, deviations from this principle were found in Balinese language repertoire of first-grade students, as in the following data:

(8) Iya bentura icang di tukadé.

3-persona thrown-passive 1-persona prep river-det

'He was thrown by me in the river'

Looking at the core predicate, sentence (7) used a passive verb. However, in sentence (7), it was unclear who played the role of the agent and the patient; whether the third person was the agent or the patient, or whether the first person was the agent or the patient. When the third person acted as the patient, the syntactic construction must be as follows:

(7a) Iya bentur icang di tukadé.

3-persona throw 1-persona prep river-det

I throw him in the river'

Conversely, when the third person acted as the agent, the sentence construction must be as follows:

(7b) Iya mentur icang di tukadé.

3-persona akt-throw 1-persona prep river-det

Based on such syntactic analysis, sentence (7) produced by children was ambiguous between passive and active, and such syntactic construction was categorized as idiosyncrasies of ambiguity in active-passive.

Based on the data presented above, first-grade students had generally mastered patterns of simple single sentences. This competence could be used by teachers as a reference in developing children's syntactic capacity. Idiosyncrasies in syntax needed attention from teachers in their teaching.

#### V. Conclusion:

Based on the data analysis results, it could be concluded that Balinese language competence of first-grade elementary school students was developing toward a more complex structure akin to adults' grammar. This development was marked by several idiosyncrasies in phonological, lexical/semantic, morphological, and syntactic aspects. Idiosyncrasies of Balinese language in children should be considered as characteristics of their language development that could be used as a reference for their learning design. Idiosyncrasies of Balinese language in first-grade students could serve as a basis for selecting, and grading teaching materials. This was important for continuous Balinese language learning to higher grades and educational levels in accordance with students' development and needs. Continuous Balinese language learning could be realized when the principles of the input hypothesis were applied critically and consistently. Additionally, teachers' creativity was needed in developing learning models and media that could foster students' interest and motivation in learning Balinese language.

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<sup>&#</sup>x27;He throws me in the river'

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