

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Language is not merely a tool for communication, but it also serves as a reflection of human cognition and cultural identity. Through language, a community expresses how they perceive, conceptualize, and understand the world around them. In cognitive linguistics, this cognitive process is deeply rooted in the use of metaphors. According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed in the foundational work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and further expanded by Kövecses (2020), metaphors are not just poetic or rhetorical devices found in literature. Instead, metaphors are fundamental cognitive mechanisms where humans understand abstract concepts (Target Domain) through more concrete experiences (Source Domain). Modern cognitive studies confirm that conceptual metaphors help traditional societies systematically organize their experiential knowledge into linguistic expressions (Beknazarova et al., 2021; Hu, 2024).

Despite the extensive literature on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), most cognitive linguistic studies have predominantly focused on major world languages, leaving a significant linguistic gap regarding how conceptual metaphors function within highly localized and endangered indigenous languages. Specifically, there is a scarcity of research analyzing the systematic cognitive structures embedded in ritual speech (tuturan adat). Investigating these structures is crucial, as ritual metaphors not only serve a communicative

purpose but also map unique cultural cosmovisions that risk being lost without rigorous linguistic documentation.

In traditional indigenous societies, conceptual metaphors are heavily embedded in oral traditions, particularly in ritual speech (*tuturan adat*). One of the most prominent cultural rituals rich in metaphorical expressions is the Hole Ritual, practiced by the indigenous community of Sabu Raijua, East Nusa Tenggara. The *Hole* ritual is an annual traditional ceremony performed by the *Jingitiu* believers to express gratitude for the harvest, purify the land from misfortunes, and maintain cosmic balance between humans, nature, and the divine creator (*Deo Ama*) (Kurniawan & Lae, 2025). However, the linguistic significance of the Hole ritual lies in its complex web of metaphorical expressions. This ritual serves as a critical site for investigation because its spoken formulas contain intricate conceptual mappings between the concrete natural environment (Source Domain) and abstract cosmic or spiritual belief systems (Target Domain). Analyzing the Hole ritual is therefore paramount to understanding how the Sabu Raijua community structurally organizes and preserves their experiential knowledge through ritual linguistic expressions. During the execution of the Hole ritual, the traditional leaders (*Mone Ama*) chant sacred incantations, prayers, and cultural narratives.

These oral texts are packed with linguistic metaphors that draw heavily from local environments, such as maritime activities (the sea, boats, waves) and agricultural life (seeds, soil, plants). For instance, life or societal structures might be conceptualized through the image of a sailing boat (*kebangga*). These metaphors function as a spiritual bridges to preserve local beliefs and cosmic

laws within the community (Liae & Jingitui, 2026). Furthermore, the ritual also plays a crucial socio-legal role in governing community behavior and resolving conflicts through the sacredness of its traditional custom norms (Bunga & Kadja, 2024).

While anthropologists and historians have widely researched the socio-religious aspects of the Hole ritual, a detailed linguistic study examining the cognitive patterns behind its oral texts remains scarce. Recent linguistic research in Indonesia demonstrates that analyzing conceptual metaphors using CMT is highly effective for uncovering deep cultural worldviews and emotional concepts embedded in text (Suri & Sutami, 2026). Understanding how the Sabu people conceptualize their world through the Hole ritual is crucial to preserving this endangered oral tradition. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting a cognitive linguistic analysis under the title: **"Metaphor Analysis of the *Hole*, A Traditional Ritual Oral Texts in Mesara."**

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background described above, this study formulates the following research questions:

1. What types of conceptual metaphors are found in the oral text of the Hole ritual?
2. What meanings are represented through those conceptual metaphors?

1.3 Objectives Of Study

In line with the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the types of conceptual metaphors used in Hole oral text.
2. To describe the meanings of metaphors used in Hole traditional texts.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are highly expected to provide valuable contributions both theoretically and practically, as outlined below:

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

It is hoped that this study will support

- 1) Advancing Cognitive Linguistics in which this study contributes to the development of cognitive linguistics, particularly in expanding the cross-cultural applicability of Lakoff and Johnson's **Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)** when utilized to analyse indigenous, non-Western oral traditions.
- 2) Enriching Ethnolinguistic Literature in which it provides fresh academic literature regarding the intersection of language, thought, and local culture, specifically focusing on how regional languages in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) encode human experiential knowledge into metaphor.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

1. For Future Researchers: The results of this study can serve as a comprehensive reference or analytical framework for university students and researchers who wish to conduct further linguistic studies on local rituals and endangered oral texts.
2. For the Sabu Raijua Community: This research helps in preserving the indigenous knowledge of the Sabu people by documenting the sacred

oral texts of the Hole ritual into a structured, written academic format, preventing the tradition from being forgotten by future generations.

3. For Local Government and Tourism Boards: The insights gained from this study can be utilized by the local government of Sabu Raijua as cultural preservation data and material to support cultural tourism, which highlights the depth and philosophy of Sabu traditional customs.