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Syntactic Patterns of Balinese Verbal Clause in Polite Utterances among Generation Z

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Abstract---This study investigates the types and syntactic patterns of Balinese verbal clauses found in polite utterances produced by Generation Z students at Warmadewa University. A descriptive qualitative method was employed for this research. The data consisted of 100 Balinese verbal clauses obtained from interviews with 20 Generation Z students at Warmadewa University. Data were collected through interviews, recording, transcription, and note-taking techniques. The clauses were analyzed by identifying their syntactic functions, categories, semantic roles, and structural patterns. There are found that Balinese verbal clauses are characterized by verbal predicates and occur in the form of transitive, intransitive, active, passive, reciprocal, and reflexive clauses. The findings show that transitive verbal clauses (28%) were the most dominant type, followed by intransitive verbal clause (22%), and active verbal clause (20%). The least frequently types were passive verbal clause (12%), reciprocal verbal clause (10%), and reflexive verbal clause (8%). The analysis also reveals several recurring syntactic patterns, including S-V, S-V-M, S-V-O, and S-V-O-M. The results also show that Generation Z students commonly use verbal predicates involving the relationship between agent, action, object, or participants. These findings indicate that Generation Z students continue to employ varied Balinese verbal clause constructions in polite communication, with transitive constructions appearing most prominently in the data.

Keywords---Syntax, Verbal Clauses, Politeness, Balinese Language, Generation Z.

Introduction

Syntax is a branch of linguistics concerned with the structural relationships among words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. In syntactic analysis, a clause is considered one of the fundamental units because it contains a predicative relationship. From a syntactic perspective, the clause is a predicate-centred construction that typically combines a subject and a predicate and may include an object, complement, and adverbial (Alwi et al., 2003; Ramlan, 2005). Verhaar (2016), distinguishes the syntactic function of these elements from their category and semantic role, a distinction that this study adopts. In generative terms, the clause is a hierarchical structure projected from the verb (Chomsky, 1995; Radford, 2009). Its syntactic patterns are shaped mainly by transitivity, voice, and mood (Kroeger, 2005). A clause generally consists of a predicate accompanied by other syntactic elements such as a subject, object, complement, and adverbial. Based on the category of its predicate, clauses can be classified into verbal, nominal, adjectival, adverbial, and prepositional clauses. A verbal clause is a clause whose predicate is occupied by a verb. Verbal clauses can occur in several forms, including transitive, intransitive, active, passive, reciprocal, and reflexive constructions. In syntactic analysis, three important aspects can be distinguished: syntactic function, syntactic category, and semantic role (Putrayasa, 2008). Syntactic functions include subject (S), predicate (P), object (O), complement (C), and adverbial or modifier (M), while syntactic categories include nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, numerals, pronouns, and prepositions (Quirk et al., 1985). The semantic roles of these elements may include agent, activity, patient, recipient, location, and other roles. These three aspects are important to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the grammatical organization, structural relationship, and meaning of clauses.

Research on Balinese verbal clause syntax has examined voice, passivization, and the verb-forming potential of different word classes. Balinese has a symmetrical voice system and shows patient primacy (Artawa & Blake, 1997; Slabakova & Ivanov, 2011). It has two passives, the -a passive and the ka-passive. The ka-passive is preferred in high-register discourse, and only the -a passive can be used in imperatives (Udayana et al., 2013). The ka-passive often appears as a polite form, and it differs semantically from the -a passive (Udayana et al., 2025). Balinese requests are expressed indirectly at two levels. The first is situational, through asking, tag questions, offering, and inviting (Netra et al., 2023). Wahyuni (2025), found that Balinese verbal clauses include active, passive, reflexive, and reciprocal forms. Udayana et al. (2025), compiled a corpus of ka- and -a passives from four Balinese storybooks, annotating each passive clause for verb root, speech style, and whether the agent appeared in the same clause, in a previous clause, or was unidentified. They complemented the corpus with a grammaticality judgment test in which 94 native-speaking Balinese majors rated 24 constructed sentences. The results showed that the ka- passive is incompatible with agent-oriented adverbials and purposive clauses, and that it contrasts semantically with the -a passive. Balinese speech verbs force includes a directive class, which is relevant to how commands and requests are encoded lexically (Lestari, 2018).

Turning to a different clause type, Swandana et al. (2024) described existential clauses in Balinese, focusing on the verb and the element that expresses

existence. Using a descriptive qualitative method, they drew primary data from five Balinese language teachers and supplemented the oral data with written data from Balinese stories, analyzing it through comparison, omission, and replacement. They found that the core structure of an existential clause consists of *ada* plus the existence element, while the extended structure adds an extension element, which yields bare and extended existential clauses. [Umiyati et al. \(2023\)](#) analyze clause and phrase structure through adjectives and found that Balinese adjectives can serve as bases for derived intransitive, transitive, passive, and resultative passive verbs. [Suweta \(2021\)](#) investigated the structural pattern of simple and compound sentences, and [Sudipa et al. \(2021\)](#), analyzed process verbs between state verbs and action verbs by using data from four collections of Balinese short stories and combining them with the framework of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM). The study identified two types of process verbs, a "happen" type and a "movement" type. Recently, [Wirawan et al. \(2025\)](#), analyzed clause complexes in classical Balinese literature through a systemic functional perspective. Taken together, these studies show that Balinese verbal clauses have been described mainly through written literary sources and elicited or judged data from native speakers, whereas the clause patterns that younger speakers, such as Generation Z, use in everyday interaction remain largely undescribed.

Balinese is not only used to convey information but also reflects social relationships between speakers. Politeness in Balinese communication may be expressed through lexical choices, speech levels, forms of address, and particular sentence or clause constructions. The linguistic choices made by speakers are influenced by factors such as age, social relationship, familiarity, and communicative situation. Politeness in Balinese has traditionally been analyzed through its speech levels. [Arka \(2005\)](#) argued that these levels differ mainly in lexicon and not in morphosyntax: the same clause and phrase structures, derivational morphology, voice marking, and grammatical relations apply across registers. [Arnawa et al. \(2022\)](#) focused their analysis on lecturers, teachers, and Balinese language practitioners to rate sentence patterns on a politeness scale.

Generation Z represents an important group in Balinese language use, which is influenced a lot by modernization. Generation Z speakers still uphold politeness norms but stress equality and openness. Their use of Balinese depends on social context and closeness more than *pm* caste alone ([Dewangga et al., 2026](#)). On the other hand, [Devi & Kasni \(2018\)](#), found that Balinese teenagers in Dandin Puri, Denpasar, still used Balinese fairly often in the family, neighborhood, education, and religion domains. Balinese nevertheless remains visible online, and some research treats Instagram as a space where the language can be sustained. [Warmadewi et al. \(2021\)](#), studied Balinese-speaking Instagram celebrities, arguing that their content can help maintain Balinese among young users, and found five of Leech's politeness maxims realized in their Balinese. [Warmadewi et al. \(2023\)](#), analyzed the speech of Balinese influencers and found all three types of code-mixing (insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization), with the mixed elements ranging from words and phrases to clauses. These different communicative situations may require speakers to adjust their linguistic choices to maintain politeness.

This study focuses on two main research questions. The first concerns the types of Balinese verbal clauses used by Generation Z speakers in polite utterances, while the second examines the syntactic patterns found in these clauses. Through these questions, the study aims to explore the variety of verbal clauses used by younger Balinese speakers and understand how they are formed based on syntactic functions, grammatical categories, and semantic roles. In addition, the study seeks to explain how these clause structures are used in polite communication and how they contribute to expressing meaning and maintaining respectful interactions in everyday Balinese conversations ([Safar & De Vos, 2022](#)).

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach by using [Creswell's \(2023\)](#) theory to examine Balinese verbal clauses in polite utterances by Generation Z students at Warmadewa University. The data were collected through interviews with 20 students who speak Balinese and regularly use the language in their daily conversations. A total of 100 verbal clauses were identified from the interview results and transcribed as the main data. Data containing verbal predicates were selected for further analysis. Each clause was examined based on its syntactic functions, grammatical categories, and semantic roles. The analysis considered the functions of subjects, predicates, objects, complements, and modifiers, along with semantic roles such as agents, patients, recipients, locations, and time expressions. The identified clauses were then grouped into six types: transitive, intransitive, active, passive, reciprocal, and reflexive constructions. The frequency and percentage of each type were also calculated to provide a clearer picture of their distribution in the data. The results are presented through examples of Balinese utterances, their English translations, and explanations of their syntactic patterns and semantic roles.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that Balinese verbal clauses used by Generation Z in polite utterances display several structural variations. The analysis focuses on the verbal predicate as the central element of the clause and examines the syntactic functions, categories, and semantic roles of the elements that accompany it. Following the classification applied in the reference study, the data are discussed in terms of transitive, intransitive, active, passive, reciprocal, and reflexive verbal clauses. Each clause is further analyzed according to its structural pattern, such as S-V, S-V-O, S-V-M, and S-V-O-M. In addition to identifying the syntactic construction, this discussion also considers how these clause patterns occur in polite communication among Generation Z speakers. However, politeness is treated as the communicative context of the utterance, while the main analytical focus remains on the syntactic structure of the verbal clauses ([Verstraete, 2005](#)).

In this study, Balinese verbal clauses used by Generation Z students at Warmadewa University are grouped into six major categories. The data focus on polite Balinese utterances produced by Gen Z speakers in university-related interactions, such as communication with lecturers, senior students, classmates, and other members of the academic community. Transitive verbal clauses contain

predicates that require an object and may be divided into monotransitive clauses, which take a single object, and bitransitive clauses, which involve two objects. In contrast, intransitive verbal clauses contain predicates that do not require an object. Active clauses are characterized by subjects that carry out or participate in an action, whereas passive clauses present the subject as the entity affected by the action. Reciprocal clauses express actions performed mutually between participants, while reflexive clauses refer to actions directed back toward the subject itself. In the context of Warmadewa University, these clause types are examined to identify how Generation Z speakers organize verbal predicates and their arguments when using Balinese in polite communication. The analysis therefore considers both the syntactic structure of the clauses and the communicative setting in which the utterances are produced.

Table 1
Balinese Verbal Clause in Polite Utterance by Generation Z

Type	Balinese Example	English Meaning	Pattern	Role
Transitive Verbal Clause	<i>Tiang maca buku ring perpustakaan.</i>	I read a book in the library.	S-V-O-M	Agent – Activity – Patient – Location
Intransitive Verbal Clause	<i>Tiang rauh semengan.</i>	I arrive in the morning.	S-V-M	Agent – Activity – Time
Active Verbal Clause	<i>I Made ngaturang buku ring gurune.</i>	I Made gives a book to the teacher.	S-V-O-M	Agent – Activity – Patient/Theme – Recipient
Passive Verbal Clause	<i>Buku punika kawacen antuk tiang.</i>	That book is read by me.	S-V-M	Patient – Activity – Agent
Reciprocal Verbal Clause	<i>Tiang sareng timpal tiange saling tulungin.</i>	My friend and I help each other.	S-V	Agent/Co-Agent – Reciprocal Activity
Reflexive Verbal Clause	<i>Tiang masiram sadurung luas.</i>	I bathe myself before leaving.	S-V-M	Agent/Patient – Activity – Time

Transitive Verbal Clause

The sentence *Tiang maca buku ring perpustakaan* means I read a book in the library. This clause is classified as a transitive verbal clause because the predicate *maca* (to read) requires an object *buku* (book). In terms of syntactic function, *tiang* functions as the subject (S), *maca* as the verbal predicate (V), *buku* as the object (O), and *ring perpustakaan* as the modifier of place (M). The clause therefore follows the pattern S-V-O-M. In terms of semantic roles, *tiang* functions as the Agent who acts, *maca* represents the Activity, *buku* functions as the Patient or Theme, and *ring perpustakaan* indicates the Location where the action takes place.

Intransitive Verbal Clause

The sentence *Tiang rauh semengan* means I arrive in the morning. This clause is categorized as an intransitive verbal clause because the predicate *rauh* (to arrive) does not require an object. Syntactically, *tiang* functions as the subject (S), *rauh* as the verbal predicate (V), and *semengan* as a modifier of time (M). Thus, the construction follows the pattern S–V–M. Semantically, *tiang* functions as the Agent or participant involved in the event, *rauh* expresses the Activity or event, and *semengan* provides the temporal information indicating when the action occurs.

Active Verbal Clause

The sentence *I Made ngaturang buku ring gurune* means I Made gives a book to the teacher. This clause is categorized as an active verbal clause because the subject *I Made* actively performs the action expressed by the predicate *ngaturang* (to give). In terms of syntactic function, *I Made* is the subject (S), *ngaturang* is the verbal predicate (V), *buku* is the object (O), and *ring gurune* functions as a modifier or recipient expression (M). The clause follows the pattern S–V–O–M. Semantically, *I Made* serves as the Agent, *ngaturang* represents the Activity, *buku* functions as the Theme because it is the entity being transferred, and *ring gurune* represents the Recipient of the action.

Passive Verbal Clause

The sentence *buku punika kawacen antuk tiang* means that book is read by me. This clause is categorized as a passive verbal clause because the subject *buku punika* is not the performer of the action but the entity affected by it. In terms of syntactic function, *buku punika* functions as the subject (S), *kawacen* as the verbal predicate (V), and *antuk tiang* as the modifier expressing the agent (M). Therefore, the clause follows the pattern S–V–M. Semantically, *buku punika* has the role of Patient or Theme, *kawacen* represents the Activity, and *tiang* functions as the Agent who acts as reading.

Reciprocal Verbal Clause

The sentence *Tiang sareng timpal tiange saling tulungin* means My friend and I help each other. This clause is classified as a reciprocal verbal clause because the action is performed mutually by the participants. The subject *tiang sareng timpal tiange* refers to more than one participant, while *saling tulung* expresses an action that is directed reciprocally between them. Syntactically, *tiang sareng timpal tiange* functions as the subject (S) and *saling tulung* functions as the verbal predicate (V), forming the pattern S–V. Semantically, the participants function as Agent and Co-Agent, while *saling tulung* represents a Reciprocal Activity because each participant both performs and receives the action.

Reflexive Verbal Clause

The sentence *Tiang masiram sadurung luas* means I bathe myself before leaving. This clause is categorized as a reflexive verbal clause because the action

performed by the subject is directed back toward the same participant. In terms of syntactic function, *tiang* functions as the subject (S), *masiram* as the verbal predicate (V), and *sadurung luas* as a modifier of time or circumstance (M). The clause therefore follows the pattern S–V–M. Semantically, *tiang* carries both the Agent and Patient roles because the subject performs the action and is also the entity affected by it, *masiram* represents the Activity, and *sadurung luas* indicates the temporal relation of the action.

Based on a dataset consisting of 100 Balinese verbal clauses, six types of verbal clauses were identified in the polite utterances used by Generation Z students. Transitive verbal clauses were the most frequently occurring type, with 28 clauses (28%), followed by intransitive verbal clauses with 22 clauses (22%). Active verbal clauses accounted for 20 clauses (20%), while passive verbal clauses occurred in 12 clauses (12%). Reciprocal verbal clauses were identified in 10 clauses (10%), and reflexive verbal clauses represented the least frequent category, with 8 clauses (8%).

Table 2
Distribution of Balinese Verbal Clauses in Polite Utterances among Generation Z

No.	Type of Verbal Clause	Frequency	Percentage
1	Transitive Verbal Clause	28	28%
2	Intransitive Verbal Clause	22	22%
3	Active Verbal Clause	20	20%
4	Passive Verbal Clause	12	12%
5	Reciprocal Verbal Clause	10	10%
6	Reflexive Verbal Clause	8	8%
Total		100	100%

These findings show that transitive and intransitive verbal clauses are more frequent than reciprocal and reflexive clauses in the dataset. The dominance of transitive clauses indicates that Generation Z speakers at Warmadewa University frequently use verbal predicates that involve an action directed toward an object or another participant. This tendency suggests that polite Balinese communication among younger speakers often contains clauses that explicitly represent the relationship between an agent, an action, and a patient or theme. In contrast, reciprocal and reflexive clauses occur less frequently because they express more specific semantic relationships, such as mutual actions between participants or actions directed back toward the subject itself. Overall, the distribution demonstrates that transitive constructions play an important role in the syntactic realization of polite Balinese utterances used by Generation Z speakers.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Balinese verbal clauses used in polite utterances by Generation Z students at Warmadewa University show a variety of syntactic constructions. Based on 100 verbal clauses collected from student interviews, six

clause types were identified, namely transitive, intransitive, active, passive, reciprocal, and reflexive verbal clauses. The analysis of syntactic functions, categories, and semantic roles demonstrates that these clauses are formed through different structural patterns, including S-V, S-V-M, S-V-O, and S-V-O-M. Among the six types, transitive verbal clauses occurred most frequently, followed by intransitive and active clauses, while reciprocal and reflexive constructions appeared less often. This distribution suggests that Generation Z students commonly use verbal predicates involving clear relationships between an agent, an action, and an object or other participant in polite Balinese communication.

The findings also indicate that syntactic structure contributes to understanding how polite utterances are organized, although politeness itself is not determined by syntax alone. Lexical choice, speech level, forms of address, and the relationship between speakers also play important roles in shaping polite communication. Therefore, the use of Balinese verbal clauses among Generation Z students reflects both grammatical structure and the social context of interaction. Overall, the study provides a description of contemporary Balinese verbal clause patterns used by younger speakers and shows that Balinese remains actively employed in polite communication within the university environment.

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