

The Use of Taboo Words in Denpasar

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Abstract--*Taboo words are considered to be inappropriate to use in every language in the world, especially Denpasar. This research aimed to analyze the motives, forms, and types of taboo words found in daily conversation used by people in Denpasar. This research is descriptive qualitative study. The observation method was used in collecting the data. After observing the data, the recording method and note taking technique were also used to collect the data. Based on the results, it was found that (1) the motives of taboo words used by the people are psychological, social, and linguistic motives. Psychologically, the taboo words are used for (a) expressing anger, (b) expressing astonishment, (c) expressing disappointment, and (d) expressing happiness. Furthermore, they are socially used for (e) attracting people's attention, (f) insulting someone, (g) showing intimacy or solidarity, (h) showing contempt, (i) showing sympathy, and (j) amusing someone. And linguistically, they are used for (k) giving emphasis on what they try to communicate. (2) Based on the form, they grammatically consist of word, phrase, compound, and reduplication. Finally, the kinds of taboo words found in this research were: (a) abusive swearing/epithets, (b) obscenity, (c) cursing, (d) religious matters/profanity/blasphemy, (e) names of one's in-laws, (f) animal imagery, (g) Children's insults (abnormal physical, psychological, or social characteristics), (h) social deviations, (i) ethnic and racial slurs, (j) vulgarity, and (k) slang.*

Key words--*taboo words, Balinese, Denpasar, motive*

I. INTRODUCTION

In social life, people are expected to express their idea politely and appropriately according to the situation and setting where they are communicating to each other. Error in using language or the diction may cause conflict which commonly occur in society (Affini, 2017; Saddhono, 2014. For instance, the word *soleh* in Indonesian has positive meaning 'devout'. If this word is uttered in Balinese, for example *cai jeleme soleh*, it means 'you are a weird person'; in this case, it has negative meaning 'weird'. The word *soleh* is one of the taboo words in Balinese which is not appropriate to address to listener, especially when the speaker and the listener have no close relationship (goodwill) to each other. This is in-a line with what was stated by AR. She stated that in communication, the rule of the game between speaker and listener needs to be considered in order to make the communication works well (AR et al., 2015).

Taboo words are words which are forbidden and avoided by certain society. Someone could be considered as impolite or might even be sanctioned or punished merely by uttering taboo words. Wardaugh (2006) points out that taboo is a prohibition in social society. In addition, it is believed to be harmful to the members of the society as it might cause anxiety, embarrassment, and shame. Nevertheless, in social life, taboo still exists as it is used in certain situation (Wardaugh, 2006). On the other hand, Jay uses 'dirty words' to refer the term taboo. The dirty words are

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used to express connotation meaning aiming to express emotions or cause emotional impact to the listeners (Jay, 1992). Furthermore, Jay states that each person generally determines the certain words in particular contexts according to the relationship of the speaker and listener and how the context influences in the conversation.

Balinese people use Modern Balinese as their mother tongue to interact in both spoken and written language (Beratha, 2012). The use of Modern Balinese is varied among Balinese people throughout the island, and each dialect is considered to be unique. However, The Balinese language used in Denpasar is found to be very interesting, since most of the population living there are migrants from various regions. Therefore, the variety of Balinese languages such as Taboo words in Denpasar have their own uniqueness compared to other regions (regencies) in Bali. The case of word *soleh* previously is one of the examples. In the social life, taboo words exist and can be found every day. The use of the words is not only used to express anger or disappointment, but it could also be used for positive things, such as starting a joke, sex-talk, storytelling, or social commentary (Jay, 2009).

The research of taboo words has been conducted by some researchers. Wijana in the research entitled *Kata-kata Kasar dalam Bahasa Jawa* 'Harsh Words in Javanese' found that Javanese speakers made comparison between the actions, conditions, or objects that were targeted to be harsh word expression with the actions taken by animals, unpleasant (physical) conditions, and objects that exist in their environment (Wijana, 2008). On the other hand, Yuliana and Rosa in their research about the types of taboo words used in the film *Law Abiding Citizen*, found three types of taboo, namely taboo of obscenity, taboo of vulgarity, and taboo of profanity (Yuliana & Rosa, 2013).

Yayuk (2019) in her research entitled *Klasifikasi Tabu pada Masyarakat Banjar* 'Taboo Classification in Banjar Communities', described two types of taboo, namely taboo of actions and taboo of languages. Based on the results of the study, it was found that the two types of taboo were motivated by two things, namely fear and comfort. The taboo of languages which were found were classified as taboo related to supernatural names, taboo related to animal names, taboo related to disease names, taboo related to parent names, taboo related to body part names, and taboo related to swear words (Yayuk, 2019).

In contrast to the three previous researchers, Junaidi and Wardani (2019) on their research of taboo words used in Pidie community did not mean to find the types of taboos used in Pidie community, but to describe the contexts of the use of taboo in the community (Saddhono, 2018). Several contexts which were found, namely the context of (1) speaker and listener, (2) setting or place of conversation, (3) time of conversation, (4) topic or event being discussed, (5) atmosphere or situation of the conversation, and (6) purpose of the conversation. In addition, the Pidie community sometimes used euphemism to replace the taboo language. However, there was not any substitute to replace the curse, other than the speaker should be silent.

Based on the previous researches, it was clearly known that most of the researchers were interested in discovering the types of taboo words and the motives behind the use of the words, whether in the movie or in the certain community. It is reasonable, since the discussions related to taboo words remain to be marginal, though the words are used much in the society. Therefore, the first things that should be considered to start the research related to taboo words are the form of the taboo words, the type of the taboo words, and the motives behind the use of the taboo words. This research aimed to discover the the form of the taboo words, the type of the taboo words, and the

motives behind the use of the taboo words in Balinese Language, since the research related to the topic in the language remain to be minimum. Considering that taboo expressions are words that are risky—they could convey both of closeness and offense in the same time—then the words might cause a fatal impact for those who are misuse them. The party that have big potential to misuse the taboo words are the Balinese language learners, especially those who learn directly in the community, without learning the language formally. The dangers of not being able to comprehend taboo words correctly could potentially be harmful since there are different levels of offensiveness which might be caused (Saddhono, 2017). How the taboo words are addressed on nonnative speakers would not have the same impact as they would on native speakers (Dewaele, 2006 in Finn, 2017). Therefore, this research is important to help readers, especially Balinese language learners, in understanding taboo words deeper and be careful in using taboo expressions in daily language.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive qualitative approach. The approach was chosen because the research aimed to provide descriptive exposure to the object under the research (Sudaryanto, 2015). The descriptive explanation was expected to maximize the space in explaining the cause and effect of the issues raised.

This research was conducted in 4 districts in Denpasar City, namely the Districts of West Denpasar, South Denpasar, East Denpasar and North Denpasar. The data were taboo words or phrases in Balinese sourced from 2 informants from each district in Denpasar. The eight informants were selected through purposive sampling based on the dialectological research criteria by Ayatrohaedi (2002), which has been modified to suit the needs of this research. The criteria for informants were described as follows.

1. Residents of Denpasar who grew up and lived in Denpasar since childhood, especially those who worked as village leaders and traditional leaders. Through this criterion, the informants were expected to know and master the terms of Balinese Language in Denpasar well.
2. Residents in the age range of 50-60 years. In the range of age, the informants are considered to be mature and could be cooperative to undergo various steps during the data collection process.
3. Based on these criteria, it is expected that the informants involved can optimally provide detail information of taboo words or phrases that grow, develop, and actively used in Denpasar.

The motives behind the use of taboo words were analyzed using Wardaugh (2016) and Anderson (in Karjalainen, 2002). In summary, Wardaugh put forward the taboo expression motives to (1) attract the attention of others, (2) show amusement/disgust, (3) be provocative, and (4) insult government intentions (Wardaugh, 2006: 239). Meanwhile, Anderson (in Karjalainen, 2002: 24) states that there are three motives in the use of taboo words, namely: psychological (psychological motives), social (social motives), and linguistics (linguistic motives). Further, the found taboo words were classified by using a combined theory from Jay (1992), Wardaugh (2006), and Montagu (in Laksana, 2009: 26-27). The classification of the taboo words, namely (1) abusive (swearing/epithets), (2) solubility (obscenity/scatology/bodily functions), (3) cursing, (4) spirituality (religious matters/profanity/blasphemy), (5) names of one's

in-laws, (6) animal comparison (animal imagery), (7) children's insults (abnormal physical, psychological, or social characteristics), (8) social deviation, (9) SARA (ethnic and racial slurs), (10) vulgarity/taboo , and (11) slang.

III. RESULTS

Based on the data, it was found that there were three motives behind the use of taboo words in Balinese Language in Denpasar. The three motives, namely psychological motives, social motives, and linguistic motives. The psychological motives found include: (1) expressing anger, (2) expressing astonishment/shock, (3) expressing disappointment/protest, and (4) expressing happiness. The social motives found include: (5) attracting the attention of others, (6) degradation/humiliation, (7) showing mental attitudes, (8) expressing amusement/disgust, (9) expressing sympathy/antipathy, and (10) entertaining others. The linguistic motive found was (11) the emphasis of the speaker. The data found, classified as follows:

Table 1. Motive: expressing anger (psychological motive)

No.	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Bangsas</i>	Word	Swear word
2	<i>Panak leak</i>	Compound word	Swear word
3	<i>Leak</i>	Word	Spirituality
4	<i>Nas Bedag</i>	Compound word	Swear word
5	<i>Nas keleng</i>	Compound word	Obscenity
6	<i>Sintli</i>	Word	Obscenity
7	<i>Cicing</i>	Word	Animal comparison
8	<i>Keleng</i>	Word	Obscenity
9	<i>Sundel</i>	Word	Social deviation
10	<i>Dakin teli</i>	Compound word	Obscenity

Table 2. Motive: expressing astonishment/shock (psychological motive)

No.	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Pletan</i>	Word	Swear word
2	<i>Bangke</i>	Word	Swear word
3	<i>Cicing</i>	Word	Animal comparison
4	<i>Keleng</i>	Word	Obscenity
5	<i>Dewa ratu</i>	Compound word	Spirituality
6	<i>Sakit gede</i>	Compound word	Swear word

7	<i>Nyem</i>	Word	Children's insult
8	<i>Buduh</i>	Word	Children's insult
9	<i>Tai</i>	Word	Obscenity

Tabel 3. Motive: expressing disappointment/protest (psychological motive)

No.	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Dewa Ratu</i>	Compound word	Spirituality
2	<i>Bangke</i>	Word	Swear word
3	<i>Nas bedag</i>	Compound word	Swear word, Animal comparison
4	<i>Neraka hidupe</i>	Phrase	Spirituality

Table 4. Motive: expressing happiness (psychological motive)

No.	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Keleng</i>	Word	Obscenity
2	<i>Bangsats</i>	Word	Vulgarity
3	<i>Goban caine</i>	Phrase	Vulgarity

Table 5. Motive: attracting the attention of others (social motive)

No	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Cing</i>	Word	Swear word
2	<i>Bangsats</i>	Word	Vulgarity
3	<i>Keleng</i>	Word	Obscenity
4	<i>Sintli</i>	Word	Obscenity

Table 6. Motive: degradation/humiliation (social motive)

No	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Sundel</i>	Word	Social deviation
2	<i>Panak Leak</i>	Compound word	Spirituality
3	<i>Panak Ubuan</i>	Compound word	Swear word
4	<i>Ubuan</i>	Word	Animal comparison

5	<i>Jleme gunung</i>	Phrase	SARA
6	<i>Jleme Munti</i>	Phrase	SARA
7	<i>Bojog</i>	Word	Animal comparison
8	<i>Jleme buduh</i>	Phrase	Children's insult
9	<i>Cicing</i>	Word	Animal comparison
10	<i>Beburon</i>	Word	Animal comparison
11	<i>Celeng</i>	Word	Animal comparison
12	<i>Bangkung</i>	Word	Animal comparison
13	<i>Odor-odor</i>	Reduplication	Slang
14	<i>Godeg poleng</i>	Phrase	Animal comparison
15	<i>Katuk</i>	Word	Obscenity

Table 7. Motive: showing mental attitudes (social motive)

No	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Bojog</i>	Word	Animal comparison
2	<i>Keleng*</i>	Word	Obscenity
3	<i>Koncreng</i>	Word	Relatives' name
4	<i>Lueng</i>	Word	Relatives' name
5	<i>Locong</i>	Word	Relatives' name
6	<i>Sundel</i>	Word	Vulgarity
7	<i>Meju malu</i>	Phrase	Obscenity
8	<i>Nok</i>	Word	Vulgarity

Table 8. Motive: expressing amusement/disgust (social motive)

No	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Jikping</i>	Word	Spirituality
2	<i>Cicing</i>	Word	Animal comparison
3	<i>Seneb basange</i>	Phrase	Vulgarity
4	<i>Dot ngutah</i>	Phrase	Obscenity

Table 9. Motive: expressing sympathy/antipathy (social motive)

No	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Dewa ratu</i>	Compound word	Spirituality
2	<i>Amah to</i>	Phrase	Curse

3	<i>Madak</i>	Word	Curse
4	<i>Madak pang enggal bangke</i>	Word	Curse
5	<i>Pantet</i>	Word	Curse

Table 10. Motive: entertaining others (social motive)

No	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Sebeng meju</i>	Compound word	Children's insult
2	<i>Goba benyah latig</i>	Phrase	Children's insult
3	<i>Amah leak</i>	Phrase	Spirituality
4	<i>Engkebin tonya</i>	Phrase	Spirituality
5	<i>Mekatuk</i>	Word	Obscenity

Table 11. Motive: the emphasis of the speaker (linguistic motive)

No	Taboo Expression	Form	Type
1	<i>Nok</i>	Word	Vulgarity
2	<i>Cing</i>	Word	Animal comparison
3	<i>Keleng</i>	Word	Vulgarity
4	<i>Not ci</i>	Phrase	Vulgarity

Based on the data above, it could be seen that taboo words in Denpasar have a variety of motives expressed by the speaker. The motives found in this research: (1) psychological motives, (2) social motives, and (3) linguistic motives that were explained as follows:

Psychological Motives

Psychological motives refers to the speaker's psychological state in expressing the taboo words. The example of the psychological motivated taboo word could be seen in the conversation and explained as follows:

T1D4: *Nas bedag, sing mulih-mulih jleme ento!*
 'Foal's head, don't go back that person!'
 (Damn, the kid hasn't come home yet!)

The phrase *nas bedag* in the expression is a type of abusive (swearing). *Nas* comes from the word *tendas* 'head' and *bedag* comes from the word *bebedag* 'foal'. In the context of the speech, the compound word *nas bedag* means 'animal brain (stupid)' which is not addressed to anyone, but merely expressed to vent anger. In the conversation, the speaker felt upset because the person who has been waiting for (in this case, the speaker's child) has not arrived at home.

T2D7: *Jleme nyem! Jam mone onden manjus?*

'Tasteless person! at this hour, hasn't taken a shower?'

(You freak! Hasn't you taken a shower at this hour?)

Nyem in the above expression means 'less salt/tasteless'. However, if it is addressed to someone, the word *nyem* has the connotation weird/freak. In this case, the speaker used *nyem* to express astonishment/shock. The speaker was surprised to find out that his grandson has not taken a bath until the evening.

T3D1: *Mimih Dewa Ratu, adi kene san hidupe?*

'Dear God, why is my life very?'

(Oh God, why is my life so chaotic?)

There are taboo expressions related to deity or in this case it is classified as spirituality (profanity). The phrase *Dewa Ratu* is commonly expressed in the motive of expressing disappointment. In this case, the speaker expressed his disappointment because he felt the life he was living was not in accordance with what he expected.

T4D1: *Keleng, ngebagusang cai jani!*

'Male genitals, the more handsome you are now!'

(Damn, the more days, the more handsome you become!)

The word *keleng* in Balinese is not merely used to express anger, but also used to express happiness. *Keleng* comes from the word *kelet* 'penis/male genitals'. The expression above is an explosive expression that shows the speaker's happiness to see his relative whom he has not met for a long time (Saddhono, 2015).

Social Motives

Social motives are intended to build certain condition between the speaker and the listener. In this case, social motives could be used to attract the attention of others, demean others, show kinship, express amusement, express sympathy, and entertain others. The social motivated taboo word could be seen in the conversation and explained as follows:

T5D1:

A: *Cing ape!*

'Dog what!'

(Damn it!)

B: *Kenapa Pa, adi memedih?*

'Why Pa, why angry?'

(What's wrong my husband? Why are you angry?)

The word *cing* in the conversation above comes from the word *cicing* 'dog' which is classified as a comparison of animals. In Balinese cognitive, dogs have the connotation of being uncivilized animals, though dogs are human friends. In Mahabrata, dogs even are considered as helpers. However, the word *cicing* has a negative meaning when expressed in social interactions. In the conversation above, The husband (A) expressed the word *cing* to seek the

attention of his wife (B). Besides functioning as an attraction for others' attention, the expression indirectly has a motive for expressing psychological anger.

T6D15: *De liunan munyi, katuk cang nyai nyanan.*

'Don't talk much, I'll fuck you then.'

(Shut up!)

Katuk has the meaning of 'sexual intercourse', which is classified as a type of obscenity. The phrase **katuk cang cai nyanan** expressed the aggravation of the speaker and at the same time demeaned the listener. The word **katuk** is similar to the following data.

T6D13: *Odor-odor nasne! Pang nawang asane!*

'I'll fuck you! Let me know the taste!'

(Shut up!)

The reduplication **odor-odor** has the same meaning as the **katuk** above, which is 'sexual intercourse'. The reduplication is functioned as a degradation toward others. **Odor-odor** is the reduplication of the word *odor* which means 'poke (with a back and forth moves)'. The **odor-odor** is classified as a slang, because not all people understand this expression. In other words, this expression can only be understood by certain groups, especially native Balinese speakers.

T7D2: *Keleng, gaya gen cai jani.*

'Male genitals, how stylish you are now!'

(Damn, how arrogant you are now!)

The word **keleng** in the expression is a taboo type of obscenity. The word **keleng** in this expression is an expletive or meaningless word. Therefore, in this case the expression has a social motive, namely for showing kinship. However, the word **keleng** could not be used in any place, especially in public, since it is contrary to the norms of politeness. This word merely applied to someone who has a close kinship (goodwill).

T8D2 & 3: *Cicing, seneb basange noli jleme jelek care iya.*

'Dog, disgusts my stomach to see an ugly person like him.'

(Yuck, I'm sick of seeing an ugly person like him.)

Based on the above expression, the word **cicing** has the same meaning as the T5D1 data, which is 'dog'. The word **seneb** has the meaning 'disgust' and the word **basang** has the meaning 'belly'. The above expression has a social motive, namely the expression of disgust to someone. This phrase is classified as vulgarity because it is contrary to the norms of politeness.

T9D4: *Madak cai pang enggal bangke!*

'Take that, I hope you die soon!'

(Go to hell!)

If the expression is addressed to someone, it will function as a curse with antipathy appointment. The word *madak* 'hopefully' is used by the speaker to pray for something good/bad to happen to the recipient of the message. If it followed by negative words such as *bangke* 'dead', the expression means badly. In this case, the speaker wanted the recipient of the message to disappear from the earth.

- T10D3: A: *Kuren caine ije?*
 ‘Your wife where?’
 (Where is your wife?)
- B: *Amah leak.*
 ‘Eaten by leak.’
 (I don’t know, I haven’t see her.)

There is a violation in the dialog above. The word *leak* means creature. *Amah leak* in the expression means ‘lost’. Based on the data, the violation occurs because the speaker intended to entertain the listener. Therefore, the expression has the motive to entertain others.

Linguistic Motives

In general, every language has styles that are used by speaker to build an interesting communication. The taboo expression used in Balinese Language in Denpasar could also be used by the speakers as a linguistic motive. Here are the data with the linguistic motive found in this research.

- T11D1: *Layah basang cang e nok.*
 ‘Hungry my stomach.’
 (I am very hungry.)

The word *nok* in the expression is an expletive expression. The word *nok* functions as an emphasis in the conversation. The word is classified as the type of vulgarity because it could not be addressed to all people, especially people with the Brahmin caste. The word *nok* is considered to be contrary to the norms of politeness in Balinese society.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it was found 11 types of taboo expressions, namely abusive (swear word), solubility (obscenity), curse, spirituality (profanity/religious matter), relatives’ name, animal comparisons (animal imagery), children’s insult, social deviations, SARA, vulgarity, and slang. The types of those taboo expressions were found in 4 forms, namely word, compound word, phrase, and reduplication. Meanwhile, the motives behind the use of the taboo expressions were classified into be 3 types, namely psychological motives included (1) expressing anger, (2) expressing astonishment/shock, (3) expressing disappointment/protest, and (4) expressing happiness; social motives included (1) attracting the attention of others, (2) degradation (humiliation), (3) expressing inner attitudes, (4) expressing amusement/disgust, (5) expressing sympathy/antipathy, and (6) entertaining others; and linguistic motive included (1) the emphasis of the speaker.

Considering the urgency of the research, it was suggested to the readers, especially the Balinese Language learners to avoid using most of the taboo expressions, except the one to express sympathy, when building a communication to others, moreover the native speakers. The learners should not use the taboo expressions before mastering the context or having a close relationship with the interlocutors.

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