

## TABOO WORDS IN DELI JAVANESE DIALECT

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### Abstract

This research was focused on taboo words used in Deli Javanese dialect. It was aimed at describing the classification of taboo words used in Deli Javanese dialect namely sex; death; excretion; bodily functions; religious matters; and politics and to investigate how frequent the taboo words were used by Javanese community in *Karang Sari* village of Medan city, North Sumatera. The descriptive qualitative method was applied by describing taboo words used by the Javanese community. The approach is sociolinguistics, which studies the perspectives of using taboo words among society in Deli Javanese dialect. The data were collected by interviewing three informants with different ages, and taking a note to identify the data of this research. The result showed that there were 18 taboo words found in Deli Javanese dialect and they were classified into six types of taboo word as mentioned before. It also showed that the causes of using taboo words were to express the emotion, such as anger, happiness, and surprises, to talk about sex, to joke and to insult. Hopefully all the findings may give some contributions and references for any further researches related to the use of taboo words within any language and also as communication guidance especially for speakers not to use taboo words.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, taboo words, Deli Javanese, dialect

### 1. Introduction

Language is a human communication tool in interacting with others and their social environment. In doing interaction, generally humans interact to create collaboration one each other in order to form, develop, and inherit culture in a broad sense. In the process of interacting, sometimes, humans disagree or have different point of view with one another. Hence, it should not be ignored to avoid severe assault between speakers because they have to behave appropriately based on the norms in their society. People also should note that all languages have certain words or expressions that are banned to be used in public. From this condition, humans as language users often use language or words that are not understood by their interlocutors such as inappropriate words that are commonly known as taboo.

Taboo is a proscription of behavior that affects everyday life including bodies and their effluvia (sweat, snot, faces, menstrual fluid, etc.); the organs and acts of sex, micturition and defecation; diseases, death and killing (including hunting and fishing); naming, addressing, touching and viewing persons and sacred beings, objects and places; food gathering, preparation and consumption that arise out of social constraints on the individual's behavior where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury (Allan & Barride, 2006: 1). In concerning of behavior, (Trudgill, 2001, Wardaugh, 1998 & Mbaya, 2002), taboo is characterized with

something supernaturally unacceptable or regarded as immoral, impropriety, and appalling character because it deals with prohibition and violates moral values, assaults, humiliates, and even judges somebody or member of society in illogical manner.

Taboo words happen in ethnic language as well. Based on the background above, this research investigates taboo words belonged to Deli Javanese dialect in North Sumatera. The use of taboo words in Deli Javanese dialect is adjusted to the application of the Javanese language which has been already assimilated to Deli language (Malay language). The words *bajingan*, *ashu*, *modar*, *sontoloyo* are the examples of the harsh words which are frequently uttered by the Javanese people if they are angry or annoyed with someone's behavior. The taboo words in Deli Javanese dialect are not to be spoken by Javanese people only, but also to be spoken by other people from different ethnics in daily conversation. Thus, the adjustment and assimilation of Javanese language into Deli language on taboo words make this research interesting to be conducted. Deli is the name of area at present called as Medan city and Deli Serdang regency located in North Sumatera province. The Javanese people have already migrated from Java island to Deli land and have lived there for many years.

Javanese language is one of the regional languages that derives from the island of Java and is spread in various provinces in Indonesia, including in the province of North Sumatra with the largest number of speakers. Javanese language is the one of the most frequently spoken ethnic languages spread all over Indonesia. Based on the level of speech, Javanese can be divided into three, namely *Ngoko*, *Madya* and *Krama* (Wedhawati, 2006: 11). *Ngoko* is Javanese dialect which is used as source of data in this research. It is frequently spoken by Sumatran people known as Deli Javanese dialect for daily conversation in informal situation. The dialect of Deli Javanese is the combination between Deli language and Javanese language. The speakers do not use every single word of Javanese during dialogue because some of the Melayu word used in daily speaking as well.

## 2. Literature Review

Sociolinguistics is one of studies about language associated with society condition. Jendra (2010, p. 9) says, "Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that takes language as a subject of study, in a way that is usually distinguished from how syntax, semantics, morphology, and phonology handle it." Hudson cited in Putri (2018, p. 11) says, "Sociolinguistics is study of language in relation to society." Wardaugh (1998, p. 12) states that sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal of being a better understanding of the structure of language and how languages function in communication, while Gumperz in Wardaugh (1998, p. 11) states that sociolinguistics is an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic structure and to observe any changes that occurs in certain society.

The concept of Taboo is expressed by Wardaugh (2006: 239). He states that Taboo is the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior because it is believed to be harmful to its members. In other words, Taboo words might cause anxiety, embarrassment, or shame. Even though taboo word is strictly prohibited by some language experts, it can be accepted in a certain condition because it shows the freedom of speech. When people talk using taboo words, they can express their feeling freely because taboo is free speech (Shabrina, 2014: 7).

Taboo is a social prohibition on words, things, actions, or people who are considered unwished by a group, culture and even a society. Taboo violates anything to do and to speak because it is unacceptable and sometimes is offensive. Taboo may cause a shame, disgrace, and feeling of uncomfortable and abusive treatment through society. On the other hand, the concept of "taboo" is the same as the concept of "magi". It is a word with the power to influence events (Junaidi, 2019: 3). Belief in taboo matters is found in archipelago in the past and today's society.

According to some experts in discussing taboo language may have their own arguments, Allan & Burridge (2006) state that taboo is a local word standing for something forbidden including a thing which is not allowed within a cultural perspective. In any culture, there is a taboo behavior and words, which both are not supposed to do and say especially in everyday life (Fairman, 2009, Jay, 1996). Cultures are also associated with languages, traditions, and habits of society. Therefore, taboo violates the norms and provisions in a particular society to be avoided (Hakim, 2013).

Consequently, so far as language is concerned, certain things are not to be said or certain objects can be referred to only in certain circumstances, for example, only by certain people, or through deliberate circumlocutions, i.e., euphemistically. Of course, there are always those who are prepared to break the taboos in an attempt to show their own freedom from such social constraints or to expose the taboos as irrational and unjustified, as in certain movements for 'free speech. To answer the problem in this study, the writer uses Wardhaugh's concept (2006: 239) which states that tabooed subjects can vary widely: sex; death; excretion; bodily functions; religious matters; and politics.

1. Sex: It is the relationship between several parts of a person's body or genital or someone's anus, for example: 'fuck', sexual intercourse 'Sex'
2. Body functions: It is related to body parts and functions of a person's body, for example: 'asshole' and 'suck'
3. Death: It is the end of life, a word that can make people scared, for example: die and damn
4. Excretion: It is a disposal of sexual organs and bodily functions, for example: shit
5. Religion: It is related to words used to show disrespect towards God in sacred things, such as: God and Oh my Lord!
6. Politics: It is the activity associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power. For example: Anarchy, provocateur, traitor, no skill to lead.

### 3. Research Method

This research is a qualitative research, which investigated a case of language used by the Javanese Deli dialect community. The research data were in the form of utterances containing taboo words available on the Deli Javanese dialect in *Karang Sari village* of Medan city of North Sumatera. The note taking technique was done for matters related to utterances. This as occurred because it is often uttered spontaneously and cannot be conditioned. This note-taking technique was also used to complement other techniques such as record techniques, listening techniques, interview techniques. Interviews were conducted with informants in the hope that accurate data could be obtained. This type of interview is

flexible and open, unstructured, not in a formal setting, and can be repeated with the same informant.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the theory and concept of taboo words referring to Wardhaugh's (2006; 239), the taboo words of Deli Javanese dialect can be explained through the following findings:

##### 4.1 The Taboo Words on Sex

Taboo words related to sex are all taboo words spoken by speakers that refer to sexual intercourse occurring between man and woman and also between other living things such as animals which refer to immoral behavior or deviations of sexuality. The word *meteng* 'pregnant', *lonte* 'whore', *cipo* 'forbidden kissing' and *ngentot* 'fucking' are the taboo words spoken in Deli Javanese dialect.

- (1a). Parto nggranyangi bojone seng wes *meteng*  
 Parto nggranyang.ACT bojo.POSS seng wes *meteng*  
 'Parto finger up his pregnant wife'
- (1b). Ojo koe gowo lonte iku nang oma  
 Ojo koe gowo.ACT lonte iku PREP. Oma  
 'Don't take the whore home'
- (1c). Sardi karo Yani *cipoan* nang dapur  
 Sardi dan Yani cipo.Act PREP. dapur  
 'Sardi and Yani kisses each other in the kitchen'
- (1d). Paino ngentot setiap malam Jumat karo wedoke  
 Paino ngentot.ACT setiap malam Jumat PREP wedok.POSS  
 'Paino fucks his wife every Thursday night'

The word *meteng* in (1a) is kind of light taboo word in which it is still accepted by people when being used in daily speaking. It is different from the word *lonte* and *cipo* (1b and 1c). These words are categorized as very taboo words which will be strickly criticized by public, even though they are sometimes used in certain situation. The taboo words are forbidden and are not good to speak because they are supposed as the bad words in the formal situation and they are regarded not to have courtesy and manners in social life as well. Further more, the word *ngentot* (1d) is really taboo word which cannot be used in public, because it sounds too rough and ought not to be used in social life.

##### 4.2 The Taboo Words on Natural Function of the Human Body

In general, every human being has parts of the body that possesses their respective functions. Still, there are several things related to the natural function of the human body that are considered taboo to be talked about or spoken in formal situation or in social life. The following words are catagorized as taboo words like *nyerocos* 'grumble', *mbayi* 'give birth', *ngeten* 'peep' used in daily communication of Deli Javanese dialiect.

- (2a). Mbakyumu *nyerocos* wae ket mau.  
 Mbakyu.POSS nyerocos.ACT wae ket mau  
 'Your sister keeps grumbling'
- (2b). Kapan *mbayine* bojomu?  
 Kapan mbayi.ACT bojo.POSS?  
 'When did your wife give birth?'

- (2c). Darma kerjane *ngeten* wong mandi  
Darma kerjane *ngeten*.ACT wong mandi  
'Darma always peeps showering people'

Based on the data above, the word *nyerocos* (2a) is light taboo word which is frequently used and still accepted in the daily speaking or in any situation. Meanwhile the words *mbayi* and *ngeten* (2b and 2c) are the taboo words which are not worted to use in social life because it has negative and immoral sense.

#### 4.3 The Taboo Words on Animal

All people has their own tradition even culture in treating and viewing the various animal behavior living around them. To see the difference between animal and human being, it could be clearly depicted that human has comon sense and good character and animal does not. The taboo words related to the animal like *wedos* 'goat' *asu* 'dog', and *ketek* 'monkey' are Deli Javanese dialect used by the javanese community of North Sumatera.

- (3a). Mambumu koyo *wedos* nek orong mandi  
Mambu.POSS koyo *wedos* nek orng mandi.  
'Your body smells like a goat if you do not take a bath'
- (3b). Nek mangan, cangekeme ojo muni koyo *asu*  
Nek mangan.ACT, cangkem.POSS ojo muni.ACT koyo *asu*  
'Dont't let your mouth sound like a dog when you eat'
- (3c). Riko manjat kelopo cepet kali koyo *ketek*  
Riko manjat.ACT kolopo cepet kali koyo *ketek*  
'You climd the coconut tree very fast like a monkey'

It can be elaborated that the words *wedos*, *asu* and *ketek* (3a,3b,3c) are taboo words that cannot be used in society. These taboo words are usually used to show some aims such as the feeling of annoying, anger and joke. The use of the taboo words often causes people hearing them feel inconvenient because it tends to similarize people to animals. However, the words are not accepted in formal speaking and even in daily dialogue.

#### 4.4 The Taboo Words on Parts of Human Body

The human body is everything that makes you up well. The basic parts of the human body are the head, neck, torso, arms and legs. Basically, each part of human body has its own function. However, at this time it is devoted to discussing only a few parts of the human body. The toboo words related to human body in Deli Javanese dialect like *pentel* 'nipple', *pantat* 'ass', *kontol* 'penis'.

- 4a). Rubi nyekel *pentel* anak gadis iku  
Rubi nyekel.ACT *pentel* anak gadis iku  
'Rubi touched the nipple of the girl'
- (4b). Wong wedo iku ndodok ketok *pantante*  
Wong wedo iku ndodok.ACT ketok panta.POSS  
'The woman's ass was seen when she squated'
- (4c). Ojo buka celonone mengko *kontol* mu didelok wong  
Ojo buka.ACT celonone mengko *kontol* mu didelok wong  
'Don't open the pants, your panis will be seen by people then'

The use of the word *pentel* (4a) is taboo because it is not polite if the word is spoken in public. Further more, the words *pantat* and *kontol* (4b and 4c) are very taboo at the level of mentioning the parts of the human body referring to the very personal things of men and women who are no longer worthy of saying or even showing. The use of these taboo words will get harsh criticism from the public. The taboo words on this level have been regarded as the bad word going beyond the politeness and not wanted to be spoken because they cause the speaker to be supposed as an immoral person.

#### 4.5 The Taboo Words on Religion Manners

The people of Kelurahan Karang Sari are mostly moslem. Thus, they have some words regarded as taboo words which are not wanted to be spoken. The taboo words like *kobor* 'grave', *neroko* 'hell' and *sing Kuoso* 'The God'.

- (5a). Beramalah sak orong melebu nang *kobor*  
 Amal.ACT sak orong melebu.ACT PREP *kobor*  
 'Prepare your goodness before getting into the grave'
- (5b). *Neroko* iku nggawe wong seng males sembayang  
 Neroko iku nggawe.ACT wong seng males sembayang  
 'The hell is for the lazy people to get prayer'
- (5c). Ojo sombong, riko udu Seng Kuoso  
 'Don't be arrogant, you are not the God'

The use of taboo word *kobor* (5a) is still considered as acceptable word in the environment of Javanese people in Desa Karang Sari. Event though it is not wanted to be spoken in public, but it is not too strange to use the word in mourning situation. The other taboo words like *neroko* and *seng Kuoso* (5b and 5c) are forbidden to be spoken against people because it will get harsh criticism from the community. The words are only wanted to be spoken in formal situation with the understanding related to religion case and not to be used for joke, anger and insult which can violate the norms in society. This kind of taboo words are no longer appropriate to say in social life.

#### 4.6 The Taboo Words on Politics

Politics is the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power. The language in politic issue is definitely influenced by tradition and culture in each country all over the world. Automatically, each language of countries has terms related to taboo words. In Indonesia especially for Deli Javanese dialect, it seems to have taboo words like *sontoloyo* 'no skill to lead/stupid' and *bangsat* 'traitor or bad one'. The two taboo words are sometimes used in political issue.

- (6a). Pejabat *sontoloyo* ora iso kerjo, mangan duet rakyat wae  
 Pejabat *sontoloyo* ora iso kerjo.ACT, mangan.ACT duet rakyat wae  
 'Just stupid official, cannot work well and do the corruption'
- (6b). Ojo jadi penguasa seng bersifat *bangsat*  
 Ojo jadi.ACT penguasa seng bersifat *bangsat*  
 'Never be a leader who has a bad character'

The words *sontoloyo* and *bangsat* are sometimes used in political environment in Indonesia particularly to express anger and disappointment to someone or people who

cannot do the work properly. These words are regarded as taboo words because they cannot be used in public and not worthy to be spoken formally. These words will give bad impact to the persons spoken with as well. In addition, the public will judge us as stupid and bad ones in social life.

## 5. Conclusion

Taboo is the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior that is believed to be harmful to its members. Furthermore, it would cause people anxious, embarrassed, or shameful. The existence of taboo in society is to have a set of values and norms. Based on the result of the research, it shows that there are 18 taboo words found in Deli Javanese dialect referring the concept of taboo word by Wardaugh (1998) namely sex; death; excretion; bodily functions; religious matters; and politics. Javanese language specifically has three types of dialect *inggil*, *madya* and *ngoko*. The use of taboo words by Javanese people located in *Karang Sari* village of Medan city is spoken with *ngoko* dialect in which it has been understood not only by Javanese people but also by the people from different ethnics. The taboo words of Deli Javanese dialect are regarded not worthy to use and they bring various forms of norm damage if being violated.

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