

# Context of Taboo Words in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village

I Made Astu Mahayana<sup>1</sup>, Ni Made Suwendri<sup>2</sup>, Anak Agung Gede Suarjaya<sup>3</sup>  
{astumahayana@gmail.com}

Faculty of Letters, Universitas Warmadewa, Denpasar, Bali-Indonesia<sup>12</sup>

**Abstract.** Every language must have taboo words. Taboo word or taboo language is expressions that should not be said carelessly. However, topics related to taboo have become an interesting study to discuss, because taboo words are part of a language that has close links with social society and culture. In Tenganan Pegringsingan itself, there are some expressions considered taboo depending on the context or situation of where, when, why, by whom, or to whom they are expressed or addressed. In addition, most taboo words in this village are slightly different from the Balinese taboo words in general, especially in Denpasar and other villages in Bali. Therefore, this study focused on the context and types of taboo words used by the people in Tenganan Pegringsingan village. The data were collected by using structured interview techniques supported by the elicitation technique. Based on the results, it was found that the context of taboo words used by Tenganan village communities occur in some context including setting, participants, ends, and norms. Meanwhile, according to the types, the taboo words in Tenganan can be classified into seven types; they are taboo words related to activities, animal names, body parts, excrement, sacred things, abusive swearing, and pronouns. There were only a few taboos found in this village if compared to the numbers of taboo words in other villages in Bali, especially in Denpasar, as the people who live in Tenganan Pegringsingan village highly uphold respect, courtesy, and sacredness in their social life.

**Keywords:** Taboo Words; Context; Tenganan Pegringsingan

## 1 Introduction

Tenganan Pegringsingan Village is one of the villages famous for its unique culture. This village has become one of Bali's tourist destinations. This village is located in the Karangasem Regency, close to the Candidasa Tourism Object. Some residents of Tenganan village work as farmers and handicraftsmen. The agricultural products and handicrafts produced by the residents are all made using traditional methods inherited from their ancestors. Hence, Tenganan Pegringsingan Village was designated as the real-traditional Bali village, known as Bali Aga, and became one of the government's national cultural heritages (Astawa et al., 2019).

Under the impact of the current globalization, the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan village keenly preserve ancient traditions and their culture. As the residents of Tenganan village are indigenous Bali tribes or commonly known as Bali Aga, their culture is considered unique compared to the common Balinese culture in general. This can be seen in the rituals, customs,

dressing styles and language they use in daily social activities. Moreover, compared with the common Balinese, the language spoken by the local people in Tenganan Pegringsingan village has its own characteristics. Their dialect is considered unique. It is not similar to the dialect of people who live in other villages, especially Denpasar. Furthermore, they also have different characteristics of language norms and politeness.

Every language must have taboo words, especially in Tenganan Pegringsingan village itself. In this village, there are some words considered taboo, one of which is kebo 'buffalo'. If the word is addressed to male buffalo, especially when it is used to conduct an abusive swearing to it, then the word kebo is considered taboo. The local people usually call the male buffalo jero gede, because it is one of an animals held to be sacred by the residents of Tenganan village. In daily life, when local people want to tell others that they have just seen a (male) buffalo, they will say "tuni tyang ningalin jero gede", 'I saw a (male) buffalo just now'. Therefore, it can be said that the word kebo is one of the words considered taboo, and in some cases, it should not be said carelessly, as well as other taboo words in Tenganan Pegringsingan village. This is in line with what proposed by Laksana (2009), in the case of taboos, the use of taboo words can be dangerous, because a word can have efficacy and harm the others (Laksana, 2009)

It should be pointed out that the problem of using swear words or taboo words stems from Patrick's (1901) statement, which reveals "why and when do we swear? Why do we choose certain words to curse?" (Jay, 2009). This indirectly gives the answer that a word/expression is taboo, depending on who we are talking to and where the conversation takes place. This phenomenon is consistent with what Jay (2009) said, that is, the offensiveness and appropriateness of a taboo word is affected by context variables and our sensitivity when hearing the phrase.

In general, some topics are considered taboo, such as sex, vital parts of the body, and so on. In America and European countries, certain expressions related to race and religion are taboo topics. For example: "Oh My God", "Jesus Christ", "Holy shit" are some expressions related to religion that should not be used carelessly. However, in Indonesia, especially Bali, words such as "Ya Allah, Mimih Dewa Ratu, are not taboo. Sociocultural factors such as gender and cultural norms affect whether the expression is the taboo or not (Schippers, 2013: 4). Similar to the word kebo which has been described above, it is an expression that is taboo and forbidden in some context in Tenganan Village, but is a common expression in other places, including Denpasar.

Based on the problems discussed above, this research is very interesting to do considering that taboo words are an inseparable part of language. This research focused on the context and types of taboo expressions used in the Tenganan Village. Therefore, it is hoped that this research can provide knowledge to readers, especially those who want to learn Balinese and its culture.

#### **Literature Review**

Taboo words are expressions that should not be said carelessly. However, topics related to taboo has become an interesting study to discuss, because these expressions are part of language that have close links with social and culture. Research on taboo words or swearing in Balinese has been done previously by several researchers. However, the research only focused on their types, forms, and references. Research focusing on the context of using taboo expressions in Balinese has never been studied or done. Nevertheless, previous studies that discussed the types and references, as well as the motives for the use of taboo expressions were used as references in this study.

Dewi et al. (2017) analyzed the swearing (swearing) used by the community in Cempaga Village. This study focused on the forms and functions of swearing found in the speech community of the Cempaga Village community. Similar to the research of Dewi (2017), research done by Dewipayani et al., (2017) analyzed the forms and functions of swearing in

Balinese. The data source in this study was the local youth in Nusa Penida. Based on those two research, it was found that the use of swearing and taboo expressions is not only negative, but it has positive benefits such as entertainment, stress relief, and as a joke. In addition, eight main functions of swearing were found, namely, to attract attention, to provide catharsis, to provoke, to create interpersonal identity, integrative, aggressive, regressive, and suppressive.

Mahayana et al. (2020) analyzed the forms, types, and motives of the use of taboo expressions in Denpasar. This study revealed that there are three motifs and ten types of taboo expressions in Denpasar. This study provides an initial description of how Balinese people communicate informally and what types of taboo expressions were found, and why they use those taboo expressions.

### **Taboo Words**

The term taboo is part of a culture. In general, taboos are things that are considered sacred, cannot be touched or spoken because they are considered as taboos or prohibitions. These taboo terms themselves can be described as offensive or insulting, shocking or disrespectful, or abusive. This taboo term is used by a speaker both personally and interpersonally. The word taboo comes from the Tongan language 'tabu' which means 'to forbid' or 'forbidden' 'forbidden' (Allan & Burridge, 2006). An expression is said to be taboo based on community norms and agreements in certain social communities. As Whorf puts it in Wardaugh (2006: 221):

“Different societies may value certain things and do them in a certain way, yet almost all of the societies that exist in this world have the same requirements of the categorization of good and bad language.”

Based on the quotation above, it can be said that not all words are considered taboo, although most people in particular community agree on certain things that there are some topics considered taboo if they are related to certain things, for example topics related to sex, body parts, excrement, etc.

Napoli & Hoeksema (2009) mentioned that there are several topics that are considered taboo such as religion, sex, health, bodily excretions, insulting physical attributes and racial/ethnic groups, extreme political, and name calling. On the other hand, Jay (1992: 2-9) called taboo terms dirty words and classified them into ten types, namely: cursing, profanity, blasphemy, taboo, obscenity, vulgarity, slang, epithets, insults and slurs, and scatology.

At certain moments, taboo words may be tolerated by some people, but others may not. Sometimes, the use of taboo expressions or swearing indicates that the speaker has, or wants to have a close personal relationship with another person. On the other hand, swearing tends to be emotive, rude, and can provoke an unpleasant impression. Ljung, (2011) classified swearing into two types, namely swearing words and non-swearing words.

He added that taboo words could not necessarily be said to be swearing, however, all forms and swear words were definitely taboo expressions, as in the example below.

- We live in hell. Trapped
- Go straight to hell!

Based on the example above, the word hell in sentence (a) retains its original meaning indicating a metaphorical interpretation of "something unpleasant" or "an unpleasant place". While the word hell in sentence (b) is an explicit swearing (Pratama, 2017).

### **Contexts**

In speech events, verbal interactions occur which always involve factors outside the language, including: the speaker, the interlocutor, the subject of the conversation and the time of the speech, as stated by Fish (Surana, 2017: 87) in the statement "Who speaks , What language, to whom, when and what end".

Hymes (in Brown & Yule, 1983: 38) explains the context of the situation, namely the speaker/writer (addressor), listener/reader (address), topic of conversation (topic), channel (channel), code (code), message form (message form), events (events), and place/time (settings). Furthermore, Hymes (in Junaidi & Wardani, 2019: 5) formulate the determinants of speech events in the context of situations that are not much different from the previous explanation, through the acronym SPEAKING. Each phoneme represents the intended determining factor.

(S) Setting and scene, namely background and situation. The setting is more physical, which includes the place and time of the speech. While the scene is a psychological setting that refers more to the psychological atmosphere that accompanies the speech.

(P) Participants, speech participants, namely people who are involved in the conversation, either directly or indirectly. Matters related to participants, such as age, education, social background, and so on.

(E) Ends, results, namely the results or responses of a conversation that is expected by the speaker (ends as outcomes), and the ultimate goal of the conversation itself (ends in view goals).

(A) Act sequence, message/mandate, consists of message form and message content.

(K) Key includes the manner, tone, attitude, or situation in the conversation. The situation of conversation, for example: serious, relaxed, friendly, and so on.

(I) Instrumentalities, namely the means of conversation. It means by what medium the conversation is delivered. For example: verbally, in writing, letters, radio, and so on.

(N) Norms, refers to the norms or rules that limit conversation. For example, what is allowed and not talked about, how to talk about it: smooth, rough, open, and so on.

(G) Genres or types, namely types or forms of discourse. This directly refers to the type of discourse delivered. For example: telephone, newspaper, poetry, lecture, and so on.

## **2 Research Methods**

### **Research Type**

This study was designed using a descriptive qualitative approach with direct observation method. Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide maximum space for researchers to describe and describe the variables studied in detail. The direct observation method was chosen because in the data collection process, researchers went directly observing participants in their natural environments over time to collect primary data. The stages in this research include: 1) data collection and 2) data analysis. In terms of data collection, the researcher involved three students in distributing questionnaires and interviews.

### **Data Source and Location of the Research**

This research is a qualitative descriptive study using data sources in the form of informants, namely the local people in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village. A qualitative approach is considered very appropriate to be used as this study aims to describe, analyze, and interpret taboo words forms in the speech of the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan Village, Karangasem. This village was chosen because it is a Bali Aga village, which is a genuine Balinese village that still maintains their unique traditions and culture. However, nowadays the culture and traditions in Tenganan village are starting to change slowly, including the language. The influence of globalization affects people's attitudes in language, including taboo expressions.

### **Research Instrument**

This research includes field research and in its implementation uses several instruments. The instruments used in this study are data tables, photo cameras and recording devices. A recording

device is needed in this study, the type of recording device used is one that can be used to record images and sound, such as a cellphone.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

Research with qualitative research methods emphasizes data collection by observation and interviews. Before conducting interviews, the first step carried out was distributing questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed to people who live in Tenganan Pegriingsingan Village, Karangasem. The contents of the questionnaire given are as follows:

- a. In your opinion, are there words that should not be said carelessly in Tenganan village? What are those words?
- b. When/Where can this expression be said?
- c. To whom should this expression not be spoken?

After giving the questionnaire, the observations and interviews were done. Interviews were conducted using unstructured interview method. As this research is qualitative research, it is very appropriate to use unstructured interview method. The informants who were interviewed were determined using the criteria proposed by Nothofer and Fernandes (in Junaidi et al., 2016), namely:

- a. Male or female,
- b. Aged + 30s.d. + 60 years.
- c. Born and raised in a local village.
- d. Can speak Balinese in the Tenganan dialect.
- e. Can speak Indonesian; and
- f. Mentally and physically healthy in the sense that the speech apparatus is perfect (Junaidi et al., 2016)

In this case, the researcher did not use interview guidelines that had been arranged systematically and completely in data collection (Estenberg in Sugiyono, 2010: 223). Therefore, the elicitation technique is considered necessary considering the data obtained is not easily obtained. This interview method only focused on getting an outline of the problems.

#### **Data Analysis Technique**

After the data were collected, the data were assembled into a text that contains descriptive and narrative elements. The data analysis technique used in this study is a qualitative analysis technique with the following steps:

- Selecting data that are truly valid,
- Describing all data on taboo words that are completely valid,
- Grouping the data based on the context, and
- Performing data analysis to draw conclusions.

#### **Data Presentation Technique**

The results of this study were in the form of contexts and types of taboo expressions analyzed based on theories that were outlined in the previous subchapter. The results were presented formally later in the form of tables and charts. Besides, they were also presented informally; the results were described in a sentence to make it easier to understand.

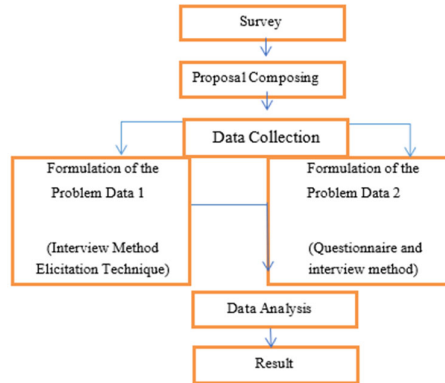


Fig 1. Flowchart of research

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### Types of Taboo Language

Taboo words have various types. In this chapter, the data of types of taboo words are described in detail including the table. Based on data found in this research, there were several types of taboo words use by people in Tenganan Pegringsingan village. They are divided into seven which can be seen as follows.

#### Taboo words related to activities

According to the data, there are several taboo words related to activities, such as *nginem* „drinking“. Besides *nginem*, the word *nyegseg* is also considered taboo in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village. The word *nyegseg* means 'eat' in a rough context. Words that have a similar meaning to *nyegseg* are *manted*. The word is also considered taboo and prohibited to express in some situation. Another taboo word related to an activity is *nyangklik* which means 'having intercourse'. This word is classified as it has something to do with sex activity. In addition to the aforementioned words above, there is one word that is taboo and is included in the type of activity word, namely *melud*. The meaning of the word *melud* itself is 'sleep'.

„Fight over something“ or in Balinese called *megarang* is a taboo word to be addressed to humans because the word *megarang* can only be addressed to animals such as the example in the sentence "nasi e garang buyung" which means "the rice is snatched by flies ". A summary of all the words above can be seen in the following table

Table 1. Summary of the types of activity taboo words

No.	Word	Type
1.	<i>Nyegseg/manted</i>	Activity (eating)
2.	<i>Nginem</i>	Activity (drinking)
3.	<i>Nyangklik</i>	Activity (having sex)
4.	<i>Melud</i>	Activity (sleeping)
5.	<i>Megarang</i>	Activity (fight over something)

### Taboo words related to animal names

In the taboo words related to animal names, there were several words found by researchers, including bojog. The word bojog which refers to 'monkey' is taboo, especially during the pesangkepan daha „the women“s social gathering event“ of Tenganan Pegringsingan village. The word is taboo because it is believed that if there were someone said the word, he/she would get a monkey as his/her spouse. Another taboo animal word is bikul 'rat'. The people of Tenganan Pegringsingan village are forbidden to mention it.

Therefore, they use jero ketut instead of bikul when talking about something related to the rats. Another word is Kaung. Kaung in Tenganan language means 'male pig'. The people of Tenganan Pegringsingan Village are not allowed to say it, especially during a formal meeting in pesangkepan event. The substitute for the word kaung is truna. Therefore, the community of this village uses euphemism truna to avoid the taboo word. Sampi „cow“ is also taboo because according to the beliefs of the Tenganan Pegringsingan community, cows are sacred animals. A summary of all the words above can be seen in the following table.

**Table 2.** Summary of taboo words for types of animals

No.	Word	Type
1.	<i>Bojog</i>	Animal (monkey)
2.	<i>Bikul</i>	Animal (rat)
3.	<i>Kaung</i>	Animal (male pig)
4	<i>Sampi</i>	Animal (cow)
5	<i>Kebo</i>	Animal (buffalo)

### Taboo words related to Body Parts

In addition to the types of taboo words above, there are other types of words that are taboo in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village, namely Taboo words related to Body Parts. There were several words related to body organs that were found, such as lengget. The meaning of the word lengget itself is the male genitalia (penis). The word is very taboo, especially if the youths say it in front of the older person. In addition to the word lengget, there is a similar type of taboo word related to genitals, namely momok which means female genitalia. A summary of all the words above can be seen in the following table.

**Table 3.** Summary of taboo words for types of body parts

No.	Word	Type
1.	<i>Lengget</i>	Body Part (penis) - (genital)
2.	<i>Momok</i>	Body Part (vagina) - (genital)

### Taboo words related to excrement

According to Cambridge English Dictionaries, excrement means the solid waste that is released from the bowels of a person or animal. Based on the results, there was only one taboo word found in the type of excrement, such as ngendig. Ngendig itself means defecation. The word is considered taboo, especially when talking to an older person.

**Table 4.** Summary of taboo words of the type of excrement

No.	Word	Type
1.	<i>Ngendig</i>	Excrement (defecation)

### Taboo words related to sacred things

The people of Tenganan Pegringsingan Village highly uphold sacred values, especially in language. There are words that are taboo to be said carelessly because they contain sacred values, namely there are six sacred names that are forbidden to be mentioned carelessly. The six sacred names are pronounced when the community performs the Nganyunang Loka ceremony, or which means the ceremony of turning the earth. The people of Tenganan Village believe that this ceremony is very important to do in order to maintain the balance of the earth. A summary of all the words above can be seen in the following table.

**Table 5.** Summary of sacred taboo words

No.	Word	Type
1.	Six sacred names	Sacred

### Taboo words used as abusive swearing

The people of Tenganan Pegringsingan Village also have curses that are unique and different from other areas in Bali. If other areas in Bali know the word *bastard* or *naskleng*, then the people of Tenganan use the words *kawah* and *kawah incuk*. The word *kawah* has the same meaning as the word 'jerk', while *incuk* does not have a specific meaning. A summary of all the words above can be seen in the following table.

**Table 6.** Summary of taboo words of swearing

No.	Word	Type
1.	<i>Kawah</i>	Abusive swearing
2.	<i>Kawah incuk</i>	Abusive swearing

### Taboo words related to pronoun

A pronoun is a type of word that replaces a noun or noun phrase. The pronominal type of taboo expressions in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village, for example, *engko* which in Indonesian means 'you'. The word *engko* is considered impolite when addressed to an older person. But in general, the word *engko* can be used for people of the same age. In addition to the word *engko*, the word *wake* is also taboo if it is addressed to older people. A summary of all the words above can be seen in the following table.

**Table 7.** Summary of taboo words of pronouns

No.	Word	Type
1.	<i>Engko</i>	Pronoun (you/your)
2.	<i>Wake</i>	Pronoun (I/my/me)

### Context of Using Taboo Words

The word taboo has various contexts of use. In the Balinese language used in the Tenganan Pegringsingan area, there were some contexts of taboo words used by Tenganan Pegringsingan village occurring in context proposed by Hymes' SPEAKING theory, including

#### Setting and scene

The setting referred to here is the place and time of the speech, while the atmosphere is a psychological setting that refers more to the psychological atmosphere that accompanies the



speech. The taboo utterances based on the context of the background and atmosphere are as follows:

Data 1

“eh, ade bojog!” (uh, there's a monkey!)

In the data, the use of the word bojog is taboo in certain places, especially in Paruman. This happens because the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan believe that if a young woman or a child says the word, then it is believed that later daha will get a husband like a bojog or a monkey. When they see a monkey they simply say "ade bo!" or “there is a monkey!”. The word "bo" is a word that is the result of the back-clipping process. In this case, the word bojog is changed to bo to avoid taboo speech.

Participants

Speech participants are people who are involved in the conversation, either directly or indirectly. The taboo utterances based on the context of participants are as follows:

Data 1

"engko ngejang sampat " (You put the broom.)

The sentence above is very taboo when addressed to older people. Instead, if a younger person wants to call an older person like grandpa, for example, they will add a ki that comes from clipping the word kaki (grandfather).

Ends or Results

The result in question is a response from a conversation that is expected by the speaker and the ultimate goal of the conversation itself. The taboo utterances based on the context of ends or results are as follows:

Data 1

“kawah sajan nak cenik to!” (cheeky little boy!)

The sentence is taboo because it is intended to curse a small child who behaves rudely to that person.

Data 2

“kawah kebo ento!” (damn that buffalo!)

This sentence is forbidden to be uttered or used to curse because the buffalo itself is sacred in Tenganan Pegringsingan.

**Norms**

Norms refer to norms or rules that limit conversation. As for taboo utterances based on the context of norms, such as six sacred names that can only be mentioned by people who attend the Nganyunang Loka ceremony or the ritual of turning the earth, even researchers are not allowed to know these six names. If it is said carelessly, there will be an outbreak in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village. This only applies in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village. The results of the clarification of the taboo language found in the Tenganan Pegringsingan area will be described in the table below.

**Table 8.** Classification of the context of using the taboo language of the Tenganan Pegringsingan area

No.	Word	Context of Using Taboo Word
1.	<i>Nyegseg</i>	Setting, speech participant
2.	<i>Nginem</i>	Speech participant

3.	<i>Nyungklik</i>	Speech participants, results
4.	<i>Melud</i>	Speech participant
5.	<i>Megarang</i>	Speech participant
6.	<i>Bojog</i>	Setting, participants, results
7.	<i>Bikul</i>	Setting, results
8.	<i>Kaung</i>	Setting, participants, results
9.	<i>Lengget</i>	Setting, participants of speech
10.	<i>Momok</i>	Setting, participants of speech
11.	<i>Ngendig</i>	Speech participant
12.	Enam nama sakral	Setting, participants, norms
13.	<i>Kawah</i>	Setting, participants, results
14.	<i>Kawah incuk</i>	Setting, participants, results
15.	<i>Engko</i>	Speech participant
16.	<i>Kebo</i>	Results

## 4 Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and explanations that have been presented in previous chapters, it can be concluded that there were several types of taboo words found in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village including taboo expressions of activity, animal, organ parts, excrement, sacred, swearing, and pronouns. In addition to the types listed above, there were also taboo language contexts found in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village, namely setting, participants, ends, and norms. Through the results of data analysis that has been described in several chapters above, it can also be concluded that the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan Village highly uphold the norms of decency. Therefore, only a few of taboo words found in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village as well as its context. The total of numbers was only sixteen.

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