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## **Taboo in Balinese Language Spoken in Sesetan Village: A Descriptive Qualitative Study**

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### **Abstract**

*This research focused on taboo words in connection with Tri Hita Karana concept. The objectives of the study are: to find out the taboo words, to find out the taboo forms, and to find out their references in Balinese language spoken in Sesetan Village. The research was designed in the form of a descriptive qualitative study. The main informant is Prajuru desa adat. The first secondary informant is Mangku dadya and the second secondary informant is Kelian desa adat. The other additional instruments were interview guide. The technique of collecting data was by an in-depth interview. The obtained data were analysed using the procedures suggested by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014). The results of the study were as follows: 1) There were 30 Taboo words in Balinese language spoken in Sesetan Village. They were group into 3 domains within the Tri Hita Karana concept. 3 words exist in Parahyangan; 26 words exist in Pawongan; and 1 word exist in Palemahan. 2) There are 20 words related to taboo forms included 15 words related to taboo names and words, and 5 words related to taboo on swearing words. 3) There were 11 references of taboo.*

**Keywords: Taboo; Words; Forms; References**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Balinese language is a local language that used as an identity by Balinese people. It was used to communicate with each other until this era. As a local language, the Balinese language is a symbol of pride, a symbol of identity, a liaison tool in the family and Balinese society, and also supports Balinese regional literature (Suweta, 2020). The position of the Balinese language as a mother tongue is used to communicate in formal or informal situation. Mother tongue was the first language from birth through their social or family. In society, there

are a lot of people who use the Balinese language to interact with each other. So, the Balinese language has the biggest role in supporting the development of Balinese culture. Each region in Bali has their own ways in using the Balinese language.

Based on the region, the Balinese language is separated into two dialects. There are mountain dialects (*Bali Aga*) and a common dialect (*Bali Dataran*), whereas each dialect has different subdialects. *Bali Aga* was an ethnic group that lived longer in Bali (Subawa et al., 2019). So, it is known that *Bali Aga* was a native Balinese with a strong culture. They live around mountains. Furthermore, *Bali Dataran* was the dialect that used by the descendants of *Bali Majapahit*. The people of *Bali Majapahit* lived in the lowlands. The one example was Badung District. After the war of *Puputan Badung*, *Denpasar* became the city's government centre. So, *Denpasar* was descended from *Bali Majapahit*. Based on the social dimension among the *Bali Majapahit*, Balinese language has several levels known as “*Sor Singgih Basa Bali*”. These levels set the rule about how Balinese people interacted in society and differentiate three dynasties of citizens. There were *Brahmana*, *Ksatria*, *Waisya*, these are called as “*Triwangsa*” and the last was *Sudra*. If one of them communicate with the higher dynasty, they should use “*Song Singgih Basa Bali*” or it is called as Balinese language level. If they were used an offensive language towards the *Tri Wangsa*, this was considered taboo.

According to Holligan (2018) “taboo” is taken by Tongan language, it was a language family of Polynesia. It is introduced by Captain James Cook, then enter into English and other Europe language whereas the meaning is prohibited or avoided actions. If one action is called as taboo, it will be automatically all of things that is related with the action will be taboo. Taboo is the speech that is contained of prohibition which should not be done by Balinese people. It is also the form of an activity or expression that can harass to other people so that it cannot be said arbitrarily (Wedlock, 2020). A term is declared taboo in accordance with the norms and agreements that apply in society. Therefore, activities and taboo expressions that found in a community cannot be separated from cultural influences. According to Napoli and Hoeksema (2009), they are classified the taboo was related to religion, sacredness, vital organs, excretions, insults that are physical, social, mental, and the mention of people's names indiscriminately. Taboo expressions in Balinese have a variety of different dialects, especially the taboo expression that found in *Sesetan Village*.

For the example, in the *Sesetan Village*, there were some castes, such as *Ida Ayu*, *Anak Agung*, and *Gusti*. They have a special name for call their father (*Ajik*). But, if using the word of “*Bapak*”, it will be taboo because it is considered impolite and underestimate to them. It was affected by external influences is the one factor of the extinction the Balinese language in daily communication. For the example “*kleng ci*”. The word of “*kleng*” (damn) is considered into abusive word. It was taboo if using this word with people who are older, especially our parent. But sometime, someone feel slang when they use this word. Furthermore, there were many information from social media that not discussed about taboo word. It causes the people loss their understanding about taboo word in *Denpasar*. Many people used social media standards as standard for daily language. Then, the role of parents in *Denpasar* also rarely taught about the taboo forms in Balinese in *Denpasar* which is caused the language start to disappear because language can be said to be alive if there are more than one person who can communicate using the language.

To preserve this language, people should understand about the language in our area, so that it is not taboo when it is heard by other people. People can use this language in our daily lives, such as having conversations with family and friends around us, because if people often use this language, they will more understand about the meaning of every taboo word in the *Denpasar* area. The youths should get more understanding about taboo word from their parents, grandparents as a native speaker. It takes awareness in each individual to do, so that the younger generation able to preserve Balinese taboo language in *Denpasar* in the appropriate ways.

## METHOD

The research was designed in the form of a descriptive qualitative study. It was conducted in *Sesetan village, Denpasar* and chose three people as the informants. Three informants in this study were selected based on a series of criteria. One of them was selected as the main informant and two of them were selected as the secondary informant (first secondary informant and second secondary informant). The main informant is *Prajuru desa adat*. The first secondary informant is *Mangku dadya* and the second secondary informant is *Kelian desa adat*. The other additional instruments was interview guide. The technique of collecting data was by an in-depth interview. The obtained data were analysed using the procedures suggested by Miles et al., (2014). Three types of data of the study were analysed as follows: For taboo words were analysed descriptively based on 3 domains in *Tri Hita Karana* concept, the forms of taboo words were analysed using the theory of Frazer (1911) and (Montagu, 2001), and the references of taboo words were analysed using the theory suggested by Laksana (2009).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study found 30 of taboo words in Balinese language spoken in *Sesetan Village*. Those words are divided into three aspects of *Tri Hita Karana* concept. There are *Parahyangan* (living harmony with God), *Pawongan* (living harmony with human), and *Palemahan* (living harmony with nature). This study also found the number of taboo forms and their references. Each of which will be explain as follows:

### Taboo Words in Balinese Language Used in *Sesetan Village*

This study identified 30 taboo words. There were 3 words of *parahyangan*, 26 words of *pawongan*, and 1 word of *palemahan*.

**Table 1. Taboo Words of *Parahyangan***

Words	Meaning	Form	Reference
<i>Ratu bhatarā</i>	is another name of “ <i>Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa</i> ” (God in Hinduism).	Names and Words	God Name
<i>Barong</i>	a manifestation of God and also called as “ <i>ratu gede</i> ”.	Names and Words	God Name
<i>Leluhur</i>	ancestor and it is also called as “ <i>hyang pitara</i> ”.	Names and Words	God Name

“*Ratu bhatarā*” is taboo and sacred word because we are prohibited to say this word when pray. It is impolite word and considered as underestimate our God name. People should use the word of “*Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*”. “*Barong*” is taboo and sacred word because people are prohibited to say “*barong*” in religious ceremony. It is impolite word and

considered as underestimate the God manifestation. In religious ceremony, people should use the word of “*ratu gede*”. *Leluhur* is taboo and sacred word because people are prohibited to say “*leluhur*” when pray to our ancestor in the temple. It is impolite word and people should use “*hyang pitara*”.

There are 26 of taboo words: *ci*, *cang*, *wak*, *jeneng*, *barang*, *ngeleklek*, *curek*, *tukung*, *perot*, *bapa*, *memek*, *lengit*, *koncreng*, *kleng*, *celak*, *teli*, *mekatuk*, *megentet*, *bangke*, *nyem*, *bangsat*, *amah to*, *lindung uyin*, *ubuan*, *nas bedag*, and *menceng* related to *Pawongan* concept. Each of which will be describe in Table 2.

**Table 2. Taboo Words of *Pawongan***

Words	Form	Reference	Words	Form	References
<i>Ci</i>	Names and Words	Personal Pronoun	<i>Kleng</i>	Swearing	Mentioning Genital
<i>Cang</i>	Names and Words	Personal Pronoun	<i>Celak</i>	Names and Words	Mentioning Genital
<i>Wak</i>	Names and Words	Personal Pronoun	<i>Teli</i>	Names and Words	Mentioning Genital
<i>Jeneng</i>	Names and Words	Adjective	<i>Mekatuk</i>	Names and Words	Sexual Activity
<i>Barang</i>	Names and Words	Adjective	<i>Megentet</i>	Names and Words	Specific Activity
<i>Ngeleklek</i>	Names and Words	Specific Activity	<i>Bangke</i>	Swearing	People Name Who Died
<i>Curek</i>	Names and Words	Illness	<i>Nyem</i>	Names and Words	Adjective
<i>Tukung</i>	Names and Words	Illness	<i>Bangsat</i>	Swearing	Adjective
<i>Perot</i>	Names and Words	Illness	<i>Amah to</i>	Swearing	Specific Activity
<i>Bapa</i>	Names and Words	Parent Name	<i>Lindung uyin</i>	Names and Words	Animal Name
<i>Memek</i>	Names and Words	Parent Name	<i>Ubuan</i>	Names and Words	Animal Name
<i>Lengit</i>	Names and Words	Specific Activity	<i>Nas bedag</i>	Swearing	Adjective
<i>Koncreng</i>	Names and Words	Relative	<i>Menceng</i>	Names and Words	Relative

The meaning of “*ci*” is you. This word is a taboo and abusive word. People are prohibited to say “*ci*” to people who older than us and people who has a higher caste because it is considered impolite, underestimate, and sin. The meaning of “*cang*” is me. This word is a taboo and abusive word. People are prohibited to say “*cang*” to people who older than us and people who has a higher caste because it is considered impolite, underestimate, and sin. The meaning of “*wak*” is me. This word is a taboo and abusive word. People are prohibited to say “*wak*” to people who older than us and people who has a higher caste because it is considered impolite, underestimate, and sin. The meaning of “*jeneng*” is face. In Balinese language, it is also called as “*mua*”. This word is a taboo and abusive word. People are prohibited to say “*jeneng*” to everyone in society because it is considered impolite and underestimate to other people face. The meaning of “*barang*” is bitch. It means a woman who wear a sexy cloth and have a sex activity with some guys to get the money. It is a taboo and dirty word. People are prohibited to use this word in public, especially for woman because it is impolite and it is considered underestimate someone. The meaning of “*ngeleklek*” is eat. It is taboo and abusive

word. People are prohibited to use “*ngeleklek*” for people because it uses for animal. The meaning of “*curek*” is deaf. It is a taboo word. People are prohibited to say this word directly into the sufferer and into people who older than us because it is considered as impolite. The meaning of “*tukung*” is stump. It is a taboo word. People are prohibited to say this word directly into the sufferer and into people who older than us because it is considered as impolite. The meaning of “*perot*” is limping. It is a taboo word. People are prohibited to say this word directly into the sufferer and into people who older than us because it is considered as impolite. The meaning of “*bapa*” is father. In Balinese, there are some people who has a higher caste (*ida ayu, gusti, anak agung, cokorda*). “*bapa*” is taboo word because we are prohibited to use this word for them. The meaning of “*memek*” is mother. In Balinese, there are some people who has a higher caste (*ida ayu, gusti, anak agung, cokorda*). “*memek*” is taboo word because we are prohibited to use this word for them. The meaning of “*lengit*” lazy. It is taboo and abusive word. People are prohibited to use this word for someone who older than us because it is considered impolite, in Balinese language it called as “*campah*”.

“*Koncreng*” is a term for relatives. It is taboo word because we are prohibited to use this word into someone who older than us. It will consider impolite and underestimate to someone. It is taboo and abusive word. Someone uses this word in an angry condition. People are prohibited to use this word for everyone in society, especially in the holy place because it is considered impolite. The meaning of “*celak*” is male genitalia (penis). It is taboo and dirty word because we are prohibited to use this word in daily conversation. It is considered impolite. It will be better and more polite if we use the word “*barang*” in conversation. The meaning of “*teli*” genitalia (vagina). It is taboo and dirty word because we are prohibited to use this word in daily conversation. It is considered impolite. It will be better and more polite if we use the word “*barang*” in conversation. “*Mekasuk*” is the term of sex activity between a woman and a man. It is taboo and dirty word. People are prohibited to say and practiced it before legal marriage and it believes to bring disaster into against the perpetrator. “*Megentet*” is the term of sex activity between animal. It is taboo, abusive, and dirty word. People are prohibited to use this word for someone because it is considered as demeaning people. The meaning of “*bangke*” is a corpse. It is taboo, abusive, and dirty word. People are prohibited to say this word in daily conversation to everyone because it is considered impolite and less appreciate of people. In Balinese language the meaning of “*nyem*” is weird. It is a taboo word. People are prohibited to use this word for every people because it is impolite and considered as mocking or reproach someone. It is taboo and abusive word. Someone uses this word in angry condition. People are prohibited to use this word for everyone in society, especially in the holy place because it is considered impolite. The meaning of “*amah to*” is “*eat that!*”. It is taboo and curse word. People are prohibited to use this word into every people in daily conversation because it is considered impolite and this word expresses about our happiness for someone disaster. The meaning of “*lindung uyin*” is an eel sprinkled with salt, same as the people who cannot silent. It is taboo word. People are prohibited to use this word for people because it is considered as equating between human and animal. The meaning of “*ubuan*” is a pet. It is taboo and abusive word. People are prohibited to use this word for people because it is considered impolite and underestimate someone. The meaning of “*nas*” is head and “*bedag*” is horse. It is taboo word. People are prohibited to use this word for people because it is considered impolite and underestimate someone. The meaning of “*menceng*” is talkative

people. It is taboo word. People are prohibited to use this word for our parent because it is considered impolite and sin, and damned.

### **Taboo Words of *Palemahan***

There was one of taboo words related to *Palemahan* concept, it was ***Wong samar***. The meaning of “*wong samar*” is a spirit in different realms that can changed easily over time, we call as an invisible creature. It is taboo word. People are prohibited to say this word directly because it is believed that we call him to come to the human realm. The word of “*wong samar*” is included into reference taboo of nature.

This study found 30 of taboo words in Balinese language spoken in *Sesetan Village, Denpasar*. Those words were divided into three aspect of *Tri Hita Karana* concept. There were *Parahyangan* (living harmony with God), *Pawongan* (living harmony with human), and *Palemahan* (living harmony with nature). Those taboo words also differentiated according to the taboo forms and their references.

There were 30 of taboo words that found by used Tri Hita Karana Concept. The study adopted the theory from (Pradana and Pratiwi, 2021), Tri Hita Karana is a philosophy that believed by Balinese people as the cause of human happiness after successfully fostering balance and good relationships with God, human, and nature. This theory was more relevant with the result of study because we found that 3 of taboo words in Parahyangan, 26 of taboo words in Pawongan, and 1 taboo word of Palemahan. Between these three concepts, the concept of pawongan has the most result of the taboo words.

This study adopted the theory from Frazer (1955) about taboo names and word, as follows: taboo of parent name, taboo of relative name, taboo of people who died, taboo name of sacred people and animal, taboo of God name, and taboo of certain word. It found 15 words related to taboo names and words which included in taboo of parent name, taboo of relative name, taboo of God name, and taboo of certain word. This study also adopted the theory from Montagu (1973) about swearing words, as follows: abusive swearing, blasphemy, curses, swearing, obscenity, and expletive and this study found 5 words related to swearing words which were included in abusive swearing. The theory was relevant with the study because, from 30 taboo words, it found 20 words related to forms of taboo.

Then, there are the references of taboo. The study adopted the theory from Laksana (2009) about the reference of taboo, as follows: (a) taboo on parents' names, (b) taboo on animal names (c) taboo on God's name, (d) taboo on people's names those who died (e) taboo on the names of relatives, (f) taboo mentioning genitals, (g) taboo mentioning sexual activity, (h) taboo related to specific professions, (i) taboo mentioning certain bodily functions, (j) taboo related to the wisdom of the ruler, (k) taboo mentioning nature or condition, (l) taboo related to illness, (m) taboo on the names of spirits, (n) taboo on personal pronouns, (o) taboo related to specific activities, (p) taboo of people name. The study found 2 taboo words related to parent names, 2 taboo words related to animal names, 3 taboo words related to God names, 1 taboo word related to people name who died, 1 taboo word related to relatives, 2 taboo words related to mentioning genitals, 1 taboo word related to sexual activity, 1 taboo word related to nature, 3 taboo words related to illness, 3 taboo words related to personal pronouns, and 3 taboo words related to specific activities. The theory was relevant with the study because, from 16 taboo references, it found 11 categories related to taboo references.

Empirically, there was no researcher conducted the study about taboo in Balinese language spoken in Sesetan Village. However, if this research compared to the previous studies, the researcher found several similarities. The first, compared with study of Morni et al., (2009) with title “The Linguistic Taboo between Malays and Ibans of Sarawak, Malaysia”. The similarity was, this research described about the important of taboo in the culture. The second compared with the study of Ismail et al., (2016) with title “Knowing the Taboos, Improve Intercultural Communication: A Study at Terengganu, East Coast of Malaysia”. The similarity was, this research used depth interview in collecting the data. The third compared with the study from (Mahayana et al., 2020) with title “The Use of Taboo Words in Denpasar”. The similarity was, this research found several forms of taboo and it used qualitative study.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the objective of this study, the finding, and the discussion in the previous chapter, the conclusions of this study are:

- 1) This study identified 30 taboo words based on *Tri Hita Karana* concept (*parahyangan*, *pawongan*, *palemahan*). There were 3 taboo words in *parahyangan* (living harmony with God), as follows: *ratu bhatara*, *barong*, and *leluhur*, 26 taboo words in *pawongan* (living harmony with human), as follows: *ci*, *cang*, *wak*, *jeneng*, *barang*, *ngeleklek*, *curek*, *tukung*, *perot*, *bapa*, *memek*, *lengit*, *koncreng*, *kleng*, *celak*, *teli*, *mekatuk*, *megentet*, *bangke*, *nyem*, *bangsat*, *amah to*, *lindung uyin*, *ubuan*, *nas bedag*, and *menceng*, 1 taboo word in *palemahan* (living harmony with nature), as follows: *wong samar*.
- 2) The study identified 20 words related to taboo forms. There were two classifications about the forms of taboo; taboo names and words, and swearing words. There were 15 words related to taboo names and words, as follows: *ratu bhatara*, *barong*, *leluhur*, *jeneng*, *ngeleklek*, *lengit*, *koncreng*, *celak*, *teli*, *mekatuk*, *ci*, *cang*, *bapa*, *memek* and *megentet*. There were 5 words related to swearing, as follows: *kleng*, *bangke*, *nyem*, *bangsat*, *ubuan*, and *nas bedag*.
- 3) The study identified 11 references of taboo with the total of words are 22 words, there are: a) related to the parent names totalling 2, namely: *bapa* and *memek*, b) related to animal names totalling 2, namely: *lindung uyin* and *ubuan*, c) related to the God names totalling 2, namely: *ratu bhatara*, *ratu gede* and *pitara*, d) related to people name who died totalling 1, namely: *bangke*, e) related to relatives totalling 1, namely: *koncreng*, f) related to mentioning genital totalling 2, namely: *celak* and *teli*, g) related to sexual activity totalling 1, namely: *mekatuk*, h) related to nature totalling 1, namely: *wong samar*, i) related to illness totalling 3, namely: *curek*, *tukung* and *perot*, j) related to personal pronoun totalling 3, namely: *ci*, *cang* and *wak*, k) related to specific activities totalling 3, namely: *ngeleklek*, *lengit* and *megentet*.

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