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## “Don’t Sweep the Floor!” Verbal and Nonverbal Taboo in Nagan Raya, Aceh

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### Abstract

*In daily life, individuals occasionally use language to connect with other individuals, and they have their specific manner to pick the language variety which can affirm their character. This language can be in the form of verbal and nonverbal language. This research aimed at finding out the types of verbal and non-verbal taboo, along with the mythical and factual reasons underlying their usage. The method used was qualitatively based. The data collection was done through several interviews with the participants who are the native speakers of Acehnese in Nagan Raya. Later on, the data were recorded using an android device and in the analysis, the three-step analysis was employed. The process was data reduction, data display, and data verification. Then the results show that, first, nine*

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*swearing taboo words are occasionally used by the people there. The reason for using these words is generally to express anger and disappointment. Second, concerning the non-verbal taboo, there were 10 data obtained concerning non-verbal taboo, and the reason behind using these nonverbal taboo is to threat the youth to get them obedient so that they can carry out the day safely.*

**Keywords:** Verbal taboo, nonverbal taboo, swear words, mythical taboo, sociolinguistics.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term taboo is original from Polynesian starting with the words *tabu* or *tapu* in the Tongan language. It was acquainted with English in the eighteenth century. The first Polynesian term has an explicit religious association. Taboo is characterized as the denial of an activity that is dependent on the conviction that such conduct is either excessively holy and blessed or excessively unsafe and damned for normal people to attempt (Fershtman et al., 2011). A few people may like to utilize language that has a solid effect when they feel miserable or irritated. For example, individuals once in a while utilize particular sorts of words that are considered as wrong words to say. One of the approaches to express their inclination is by creating forbidden words, or taboo words. The words they use most is for swearing. The reason is that the words are the most grounded approach to express their disappointment.

Akerlof (1980) states that human conduct is not only represented by self-awareness. Social orders frequently have shared qualities and principles of satisfactory conduct that individuals from the general public are urged to pursue. A culture or general society aides the conduct and the considerations of their individuals by settling it upon desires and guidelines. The procedures of conduct rules are normally alluded to as social standards and taboos. These standards and taboos, of course, affect our lives. How we carry on, dress, eat, and drive, just as our sexual coexistence, are altogether administered by the standards and taboos of the social orders. While there is broad research on social standards, taboos were chiefly examined by anthropologists that have recorded and categorized taboos in various social orders.

As Wardhaugh (2000) has stated that taboo is the forbiddance or shirking in any general public of conduct accepted to be unsafe to its individuals in that it would cause them uneasiness, humiliation, or disgrace. At the point when individuals are in passionate condition, it is here and there hard for them to control words they use. Accordingly, their words mix into different characters. This is the forbidden word that is improper to use out in the open. Ghounane (2013) includes that the utilization of forbidden words starts with one individual then onto the next relying upon certain social factors, for example, the state of outrageousness, frustration, and irritation. The presence of forbidden words can be seen from different sources, for example, in movies, songs, television shows, and society.

Nagan Raya is one of the areas in Aceh that is encompassed by beachfront zone and marsh zone. Nagan Raya is the consequence of the expansion of the West Aceh (Meulaboh) region. The people in Nagan Raya have various occupation. The general public lives in the seaside zone usually fill in as fishermen. The general public who

live in the marsh region, for the most part, fill in as rancher, and the individuals who live in downtown region function as civilian officers.

Given the researchers' involvement, they find that the vast majority in Nagan Raya speak Acehnese language as their primary language in everyday discussion. They utilize the language simply like other Acehnese speakers in other parts of Aceh. They abstain from utilizing words and articulations which are horrendous, wrong or humiliating to them or to whom they are talking in regular interactions because of their way of life and conviction. This act is so that they can be accepted by their society (Jaya & Daud, 2017). These sorts of standards and traditions are accepted to be innate. The facts confirm that language and culture are two related things, incorporating into the case of Nagan Raya. Khatib et al. (2016) state that it has commonly concurred that language and culture are firmly related. Language can be seen as a verbal articulation of culture. It is utilized to keep up and pass on culture and social ties. Likewise, Rosadi et al. (2013) express that language cannot be hurled in human lives since it is a significantly powerful thing in making decent correspondence. In this way, culture is not just associated with language, yet also, a fundamental thing to accomplish great correspondence.

Briefly, from the elaboration above, this study seeks to find out the answer to the following question: What are the verbal taboo and nonverbal taboo in the area of Nagan Raya? And what are their reasons to categorize the words/phrases and the actions as parts of taboo in their daily life?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Taboos are authorized by social discipline. The most recognizable social discipline includes the frames of mind and responses of different individuals from society (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). For such social discipline to be viable, the deeds must be perceptible. As it happens in society, how might somebody be rebuffed for having bad words to say? Considerations are not perceptible, though. In any case, social discipline can likewise act naturally dispensed (Benabou & Tirole, 2004). Taboos are an essential piece of any social identity. Receiving a personality suggests that tolerating the taboos and the social standards related to the character shown during public interactions. The longer a person keeps up a character and to see oneself as an ethical individual as characterized by one's personality, the more imperative thought that characterizes him/her marked on as its cost of reasoning about disregarding a taboo (Haidt et al., 1997).

What is the benefit of utilizing taboos instead of social standards to control certain conduct? Taboos that punish for simply considering a deviation may force a much lower punishment that is regardless adequate to stop people from contemplating the choice to go astray. To represent this structure, think about the unthinkable against barbarianism. When somebody is starving, the private advantage of digressing from this forbidden condition might be huge. In this way, the best way to prevent such conduct is to force a forbidden by including people even to consider such a demonstration (Cole et al., 1998).

Gao (2013) contends that in each general public there are things which are accepted to be not suitable whenever spoken on open events. Countless words are considered in this way taken as senseless, indecent or foul when utilized in

correspondence. These words and utterances frequently called forbidden words. Wardhaugh (2006) clarifies that forbidden is the exclusion in any general public of conduct accepted to be unsafe to its individuals in that it would cause them uneasiness, humiliation, or disgrace. It is an incredibly solid imperative. In numerous societies, a few principles and standards exist to keep a relationship among individuals in public. For instance, similarly to different spots, individuals in Nagan Raya are not permitted to state messy words or swear words in front of kids. Whoever disrupts this norm, they are considered as improper individuals. That is the reason individuals must talk and convey their thought positively to keep social relationships well. Disrupting the norm will not bring any usefulness for the speaker. Wardhaugh (2006) says that disrupting those guidelines and standards may excite extensive remark. He additionally includes that the punishment for breaking etymological unthinkable words can be extreme, for irreverence and foulness are still wrongdoings in numerous locales, however, it is not liable to cost your life (Wardhaugh, 2006).

There have been a few studies on taboo usage as elaborated below. First, Junaidi (2017) practiced an examination about forbidden words and its utilization with regards to Pidie people group. The consequence of the study demonstrates that the unthinkable words are divided into two categories: forbidden words dependent on contexts and dependent on mental inspiration. Therefore, they utilize elective terms called epithets to supplant the unthinkable words. Second, Maskur (2016) additionally observed taboo utilization in Keude Aceh traditional market, East Aceh. The discoveries of study have uncovered that the sorts of forbidden words in Acehnese society are affront, irreverence, foulness, and appellation. The research additionally discovered that the components of utilizing unthinkable words by Acehnese individuals are as a result of resentment, sex, occupation, and living condition. Last, a study directed by Teguh (2008). He examined the setting of forbidden and indirect words communicated in a movie entitled "Ali G Indahouse" cast by Otherwise known as Sacha Cohen. The information of this examination is taken from the content of the film which is separated into four groupings; they are starting, clash, peak and completion. The researchers parted the film into four successions to make the examination less demanding for the reader. In a result, the scientist found that the three sorts of unthinkable words to be specifically forbidden foulness, forbidden indecency, and unthinkable obscenity and four kinds of indirect articulations; they are doublespeak for death, an epithet for the profane, religious epithet and sexual epithet.

Ullmann (1972) arranged the kind of taboo based on psychological aspects such as taboo of ear, the taboo of delicacy, and taboo of respectability. Also, Sutarman (2013) specifies one more kind of taboo other than those characterized by Ullmann (1972) which is forbidden words dependent on religious requests. The grouping of kinds of forbidden by Sutarman (2013) is proper to portray the sorts of unthinkable language incorporated into the way of life of Nagan Raya society. Because of the Nagan Raya people group is a general public that grasps the faith in a religion whose dominant part is Islam. Religion is a direction for all devoted individuals, who show its adherents to do great both as far as deeds and words. Thus, the religious network is required to absolute the great words and keep away from the taboo words since God has clarified that each illegal word is disallowed to be spoken. In religion, it is not allowed to specify God's name for bad things. God additionally dislikes His kins to express inconsiderate or impolite things to other people (Sutarman, 2013).

### 3. METHODS

This research was directed by utilizing qualitative methodology. The qualitative research approach underlines above deciphering and clarifying the information acquired normatively. Creswell (2007) clarifies that qualitative research is directed by a common setting as an examination of understanding a social or human issue dependent on building perplexing pictures, broke down words and reports point by point perspective of sources. He implies that the steps for occasional qualitative research include investigatory and elucidating center, which implies that every one of the information will be narrated in words expressively. Data were information accumulated straightforwardly by the researchers. The researchers were specifically engaged with the way toward gathering the information as the insider in this type of research. The researchers can utilize free meetings to get the information since it made the respondents feel progressively good and relaxed in giving the data; in this way, it very well may be less demanding to accomplish the essential information through the interview which was led in Acehnese.

In gathering the data, the researchers directed several meetings for the interview which were open and less organized. The researchers started the meeting with a straightforward discussion about taboo words to some Nagan Rayan native speakers. The interview was held for around 10-15 minutes for every respondent and it was recorded by utilizing OPPO F7 android cell phone. The reason the researchers utilized the cell phone is that it was portable and simple to be utilized. Furthermore, in the data analysis process, the researchers used a three-step investigation by Miles et al. (2014). The steps were as in the following. First, the researchers chose information from the recording chronicle to locate the most substantial and relevant data. From that point onward, the researchers made a transcript of the taboo words and taboo actions, then coded them. At that point, the researchers ordered the words and actions and give codes to them based on their sorts and setting. At last, the researchers investigated the information by relating the findings to the theoretical bases to reach a scientific determination.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the unstructured interviews that were conducted in the procedure of data collection, the following findings were obtained.

**Table 1.** Verbal taboo.

Data code	Taboo word	English word
Data 1	<i>Bret mak</i>	Your mother's private part
Data 2	<i>Seuh ta'eun</i>	The residual breeding of evil
Data 3	<i>Aneuk tet</i>	Clitoris
Data 4	<i>Haram jadah</i>	Bastard
Data 5	<i>Lage bui or lage asee</i>	Like a pig/like a dog
Data 6	<i>Aneuk engkong</i>	The son of a (type of) bear
Data 7	<i>Pukoi ma</i>	Someone's mother's private part
Data 8	<i>Aneuk mahut</i>	The breeding of evil
Data 9	<i>Boh kuk kah</i>	Your father's private part

Table 1 shows the most often taboo words that are used by people in Nagan Raya. From data 1 or shortened to be D1 *bret mak* which means 'your mother's private part' is a phrase that is usually uttered when someone is angry. Below is provided a condition when someone says this phrase.

*Excerpt 1: A was mopping the floor. Suddenly, she fell off by her own because she did not see the slippery floor behind her. So she was angry and she said "bret mak".*

In the D1 condition, we can see that the phrase was stated because the person was angry because she accidentally fell off the floor. So, the reason why this word was used is anger. Besides, the other phrases are also said when the people in Nagan Raya are angry. The word *bret ma* is considered a taboo word to say in Acehese culture because it refers to someone's mother sexual anatomy. A similar explanation is also addressed to D3 *aneuk tet*, D7 *pukoi ma*, and D9 *boh kuk kah*. These phrases refer to sexual inferences which are included as prohibited words to say.

In D2, the expression is *seuh ta'eun* which means 'the residual breeding of an evil'. The word *ta'eun* in Acehese is seen as a bad word for evil as it is considered an evil that can bring imperil to life. In some cases, the *ta'eun* can also cause death. This kind of evil does not attack human beings only, but it also attacks other animals, usually chickens. The type of disease that it usually brings is acute diarrhoea. So that it is considered bad-mannered when someone calls other people or swear using the word *ta'eun*. An identical elaboration is also shown to D8 *aneuk mahut* which means 'the evil breeding'. The word *mahut* means 'very cunning evil'. It will do anything to get what it wants. Most of the time, people say this phrase when a person is committing a really bad and immoral deed.

Next, the data of D4 *haram jadah* which means 'bastard' refers to a child who is born not in an official marriage. Acehese people see this phenomenon as a cursed phenomenon and can bring misfortune. So calling a person using this word is prohibited in Nagan Raya. However, the word is occasionally slipped off someone's tongue when she/he is furious to someone and want to show his/her anger.

Finally, for D5 *lagee bui/lagee asee* and D6 *aneuk engkong* are also taboo swear words that were found during the data collection. The situation is depicted below.

*Excerpt 2: "Pakon brok that akai kah? Lagee asee kah!" [Why are you so evil? You are like a dog!]*

The context that was made during the conversation above is that the speaker was angry because his brother took his toy without permission. This expression is considered taboo in Acehese because the word *asee* 'dog' has a negative connotation in Acehese. The culture of Aceh, which is solidified with Islam, has seen that 'dog' and 'pig' are filthy. So, touching it is an act against both culture and religion. When a person is extremely angry, usually he/she will say such epithet to show his furious emotion that he has considered the person he/she is angry at as a filthy animal. Also, similar elaboration entails the last example shown in D6 which is *aneuk engkong* 'the son of a (type of) bear'. In Acehese culture, *engkong* is known as 'an obscene animal'. It usually does bad deeds such as stealing farmers' harvest and even rape women. People in the village said that a long time ago, there were quite a few women who were raped by this type of bear. So, calling a person with the word *engkong* really gives him/her a bad accentuation of what/ she/he does.

Concerning to reason, mostly, taboo swear words are uttered when the people in Nagan Raya are angry. As stated by Wang (2013) that swear words—which are taboo in this case—are mostly used to express feelings and emotions. However, besides negative emotion, taboo words are also used to show emphasis, to draw attention to social closeness and solidarity. Furthermore, it is found that younger people tend to swear using these taboo words more compared to the elderly. It may be in line with the goal of swearing and taboo are interchangeably used by young people today. Habibovic (2010) adds that young men/men and young ladies/ladies or maybe even younger ladies these days swear much more than in the past. The accentuation like this happens because of the reality that people nowadays need the taboo words more to express themselves than older people did so that the taboo words have turned out to be basic in language use and may thusly not be viewed as taboo anymore (Habibovic, 2010).

Next, Table 2 provides the result of the nonverbal taboo in the society of Nagan Raya.

**Table 2.** Nonverbal taboo.

Data code	Taboo action	Mythical misfortune
Data 10	Do not sit on a pillow	You will have an ulcer on the buttocks
Data 11	Do not eat while walking	Your legs will grow to be very big
Data 12	Do not sweep the floor in the evening twilight	You will sweep away all wealth and prosperity
Data 13	Do not talk while eating	Devils will enter your mouth
Data 14	Do not whistle at night	A snake will come
Data 15	Do not buy salt at night	You will be poor
Data 16	Do not buy needle at night	A ghost will come
Data 17	Do not spill rice on the bed	You will dream of a terrible tiger
Data 18	Do not eat in the casserole	Your mouth will grow very large
Data 19	Do not sit on the stairs/on the doorway	You will stop the wealth from entering your house

From Table 2, we can learn that besides the verbal taboo as has been elaborated in the previous part, there is also nonverbal taboo in the society of Nagan Raya. From D10, it can be seen that people there are prohibited to sit on a pillow. The misfortune they will bring if they do so is that they will have an ulcer on their buttocks. They were prohibited to sit on the pillow because the pillow is a means of laying someone's head. In Acehese culture, the head is considered to be the most respected part. It is extremely prohibited to touch someone's head in any condition without asking the person's permission. Otherwise, the person who touches another person's head would be considered as an ill-mannered person and a quarrel can take place. Then, in D11, children are usually told to sit when they eat. They are told to do so because the parents do not want the children to spill the rice all over the house. This can lead to a hectic additional household when they have to sweep the whole house since it is known that rice is hard to clean because it sticks. Next, in D12, the elderly in Nagan Raya ban their youth to sweep the floor in the evening twilight. Mythically, they can sweep away all the wealth and prosperity that are coming to their house. However, it was seen as only a mythical reason. The actual reason was that the elders do not want the air inside the house to become dusty. Long ago, the Acehese people build their house with the ground as the floor. So, if the ground is being swept, the dust particles can rise into the

air and cause inconvenience situation during dinner. Shortly, the action of sweeping the floor during the evening is forbidden ever since.

Furthermore, in D13 we can see that people in Nagan Raya are forbidden to talk while eating. The mythical reason lying behind this is that because devils will enter the mouth, but the factual reason is that it is impolite to speak while eating. Then in D14, ladies are prohibited to whistle at night, otherwise, a snake will come into the house. Factually, it is forbidden to whistle because according to Islamic belief, the voice of women is *aurat* which is forbidden to show. The *aurat* is a woman's whole body except for her face and her hands. They must be covered when she in front of non *mahram* men or 'marriageable kin'. Moreover, in D15, it is forbidden to buy salt at night because it can cause poverty. The actual reason is that salt can easily be spilled and the superfine grain is not easy to clean, especially at night. Then in D16, it is forbidden to buy a needle at night because a ghost will come. However, this prohibition is based on the assumption that if a person sews at night, he/she can hurt him/herself with the needle because it is not clear enough to see at night. In D17, it is disallowed to spill rice on the bed, otherwise, the person who sleeps on the bed will dream of a terrible tiger. The fact is that because rice is so sticky and hard to clean when it sticks to the mattress. So the prohibition was made. Next, in D18, the elders in Nagan Raya also prohibit the children to eat in the casserole by threatening them that their mouth will grow large if they do so. However, the fact is that it is unmannered to eat in the casserole as it shows a person is very greedy. Finally, in D19, it can be seen that the people in Nagan Raya are not allowed to sit on the stairways or doorways as it is believed it can block away from the path of wealth that is in progress coming into the house. This threat was made because when someone is sitting on the stairways or doorways, it can disturb people who are coming in or out of the house.

From all these data found related to the nonverbal taboo, it can be seen the major reason for the nonverbal taboo is because the society is eager to set obedience, which is mostly based on Islamic beliefs. This is in line with [Sutarman \(2013\)](#) who specified a taboo based on the religious aspect. Specifically for Nagan Raya public, the prohibition is mostly made because they want children to be obedient in terms of becoming religious, safe, and well-mannered human beings.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The researchers conclude two main points based on the research questions posed in the earliest section of this article. First, this study found that there is verbal taboo such as xxx used as swearing. The main reason underlying the usage is because people want to express their angry feelings. Second, the nonverbal taboo is related to actions that are prohibited in some certain time of the day. Most of this type of prohibition is strongly related to Islam. And the underpinning reason is to make their youth to be more obedient; both to parents and God.

From this study, the researchers further suggest other researchers who are interested in the field of sociolinguistics to conduct similar studies in specific scope with different aspects of taboo and the factors accompanying the usage. Besides, the researchers also suggest more studies and analysis on taboo words in other areas, tribes, and cultures so that it can enrich the literature in the field of taboo language, in specific.



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