



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

A Natural Semantic Metalanguage Approach on the Meaning of Animal Taboo Names in the Acehese Culture

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Abstract

This paper utilizes the Natural Semantic Metalanguage Approach (NSM) to explore the meanings of animal-related taboo names among the Acehese in Indonesia. Through qualitative interviews with 12 respondents from Langsa City and Peureulak District in East Aceh, the NSM approach reveals two categories of animal taboos. The first, the taboo of swearing, involves offensive language equating individuals with animals like 'bui' (pig), 'asèe' (dog), 'pa'ee' (gecko), 'muruwa' (monitor lizard), and 'lemo' (cow). The second, the taboo of fear, rooted in cultural beliefs, deems certain animals sacred and prohibits mentioning their names in natural settings, including 'rimueng' (tiger), 'gajah' (elephant), 'buya' (crocodile), 'badeuk' (rhinoceros), 'uleue' (snake), and 'tikôh' (rat). Acehese use alternative names to show respect, reflecting a belief that respecting nature facilitates harmonious living. The semantic primitive meaning of animals' taboo for swearing involves a substantive component, a substantive relational of a kind, and bad as an evaluator. Equating humans with these animals is prohibited when their names are used in the context of insulting others. The taboo of fear is attributed to the animals' perceived holiness and sacredness, with the semantic primitive involving something kind and bad. Acehese believe these animals possess mystical powers and can hear their names when being called, hence suggesting the use of alternative names for these animals is preferable.

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Citation in APA style: Ulfa, M., Mulyadi, Pujiono, M., & Nasution, K. (2024). A natural semantic metalanguage approach on the meaning of animal taboo names in the Acehese culture. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 11(1), 491-509.

Received March 1, 2023; Revised August 2, 2023; Accepted December 9, 2023; Published Online January 31, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v11i1.31061>

Keywords: Acehese, culture, taboo, natural semantic metalanguage.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language cannot be separated from culture in society. The culture prevalent in society influences human expression through language. One language phenomenon intricately linked to culture in society is taboo language. The case of taboo represents cultural characteristics that people should be aware of (Purba et al., 2022). Taboo is an unwritten rule in society expressed by each speech community within their social interactions. One such language is Acehese, which serves as the predominant language among the Acehese tribes in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh province.

Taboo in Acehese can be in the form of words, phrases, or clauses that are considered not only meanings that contain elements of humiliation and insults but also related to magic, holy, and sacred meanings so that it is taboo to speak them. Many previous researchers have carried out research related to taboos. Research on taboo has been explored through a psycholinguistic approach (Jay, 2009; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Jay et al., 2006; Roest et al., 2018; Rosenberg et al., 2017). Other studies, such as translation studies, have been conducted by Robati and Zand (2018). Ethnolinguistics has delved into language taboos, as seen in the work by Mbaya (2002). Taboos were studied through the neurolinguistic lens by Hansen et al. (2019), language acquisition (LA) by Khaghaninejad et al. (2020), and sociopragmatics by Gabriel and Charlotte (2021).

Acehese researchers such as Yusuf and Yusuf (2014), Junaidi and Wardani (2019), and Aziz et al. (2020) have contributed significantly to the discourse on taboos. Yusuf and Yusuf (2014) explored cultural prohibition in Acehese, investigating those related to mystical threats. Furthermore, Aziz et al. (2020) concluded that taboo words are usually met with rejection, but some can be used humorously or persuasively. The Acehese usually use nicknames to express anger towards someone who has violated societal values or norms. While existing studies have made valuable contributions, none has explored taboos in the Acehese language through the lens of the Natural Semantic Metalinguistic (NSM) approach. In addition, research related to taboo languages in Aceh society related to customs, values, and beliefs can be used as cultural literacy for the younger generation in Aceh. Mkandawire (2015) defines cultural literacy as an individual's ability to understand and appreciate the customs, values, beliefs, and lifestyles of people in particular.

This research was conducted in Aceh province, specifically in Langsa City and Peureulak District in East Aceh. Exploring taboos among Acehese people in Langsa and Peureulak is important for a few reasons. Firstly, in the modern era, it is undeniable that a cultural shift is occurring among the people who are the custodians of the culture itself. This shift is also evident among Acehese people in urban areas, where many, especially the younger generation, no longer understand Acehese language and customs, including taboo elements. Beliefs surrounding taboos also evolve across generations, and many younger generations of Acehese perceive taboos as limited to offensive language and insults that can potentially disrupt societal harmony (Ulfa et al., 2018).

Secondly, a taboo serves as a benchmark for the existence of a moral and ethical education within a specific ethnic group. Often considered to contain moral messages,

individuals who adhere to taboos find themselves compelled to abandon certain actions deemed contrary or prohibited in their belief systems (Saputri, 2022). In Addition, Baravati and Rangriz (2019) posit that the acceptance of taboo words provides a clear example of how linguistic behavior reflects shifts in attitudes. Scientifically, what the ancestors entrusted through taboos on language and behavior is still preserved by the Acehnese people, especially the younger generation, as a form of cultural defense. This perspective aligns with Vera and Nuraiza's (2021) opinion that speaking of taboo as a form of language attitude and the impact of psychological influences on the activities in Aceh communities represents a cultural legacy passed down by their ancestors from generation to generation. Thirdly, a comprehensive exploration of literature, including books, dissertations, and other scientific works, reveals a scarcity of research taboos. Little attention has been given to investigating taboos in Acehnese culture (Aziz et al., 2020). This research on taboo languages in Acehnese society aims to deepen the academic community's understanding of taboo meanings and differentiate between what constitutes taboo and what does not.

Taboos not only cover cultural aspects revered for their sacredness but also arise from social conditions that require the use of polite language in communication. For example, within Acehnese culture, certain animal names are prohibited or taboo to use while in the forest or when addressing others as a means of preventing insults. The tiger and elephant are regarded as strong beasts that are thought to rule the forest. Thus, discussing their names in specific settings or at specific times is frowned upon. It is believed that mentioning their names will attract their presence (Aziz et al., 2020).

The reasons behind the use of animal taboo names are divided into two categories. Firstly, it is not permitted to mention the animal names intended as swearing, such as referring to another person as the *pa'e* 'gecko', as shown in (a). Secondly, the prohibition involves certain animals due to fear, respect, and the sacredness associated with their existence, as shown in (b):

- (a) *Pa'ee keunoe tajak ilèe*
Gecko come here we go for a while
'Come here, gecko'.
- (b) *Rimueng paléh*
Tiger bad
'Bad tiger'.

Related to the taboo data above, it can be concluded that the use of taboo can be influenced by culture. A culture or society shapes the conduct and mindset of its members through mutually accepted expectations and regulations (Fershtman et al., 2011). Taboos carry semantic meanings that are deeply embedded in words or constructions, decipherable only within the specific context of their cultural significance. The taboo expressions within Acehnese culture are shaped by various factors such as impoliteness, humiliation, sanctity, and sacredness, often linked to magical elements. (Aziz et al., 2020). These factors, perceived as culturally significant by the Acehnese community, contribute to the creation of taboos that instill fear through shared knowledge within the local community. This present study emphasizes that the concept of taboo extends beyond merely categorizing forbidden expressions; it goes deeper into a cultural exploration, using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach to unveil the broader cultural meanings of these taboos.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Natural Semantic Metalinguistic (NSM)

The Natural Semantic Metalinguistic (NSM) theory is designed to explain all meanings, including lexical meaning, illusory meaning, and grammatical meaning. This theory was developed by Wierzbicka (1996) and Goddard (1996). It is an approach that uses the study of lexical semantics, which rests on the assumption that every language has a set of meanings that cannot be broken down into more superficial substances (Arnawa, 2009). This simplest meaning is believed to be inherent in everyone since infancy.

The analytical method used in implementing this theory is based on reductive paraphrasing. Furthermore, the theory assumes that a sign cannot be analyzed into a form that is not the sign itself, which means that it is impossible to analyze the meaning of a combination of forms that does not align with the form itself. This assumption is rooted in semiotic principles, i.e., the theory of signs (Goddard, 1994; Taib & Mulyadi, 2022). It is based on the understanding that the meaning of a lexicon is a configuration of the semantic primitive and is not determined by other meanings in the lexicon. A semantic primitive is a set of meanings that cannot change (Goddard, 1986). The primary assumption is meaning that cannot be fully described without a set of semantic primitives (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014). In other words, the meaning of a word is a configuration of the semantic primitives.

Thus, meaning analysis will be discrete, complete, and straightforward without other discrete meaning combination residues (Goddard, 2008; Wierzbicka, 1996). This meaning is a reflection of the fundamental human mind. The semantic primitive meaning can be extracted from the semantic primitive, which is the only way to represent meaning (Wierzbicka, 1996). The explication of meaning must include the meanings of words that are intuitively related or at least have the same meaning field, and the meanings of those words must be analyzed based on their components.

Semantic primitives presented in the NSM theory refer to the English component. Wierzbicka (1996) has identified 66 English semantic primitives such as ‘think’, ‘know’, ‘want’, ‘feel’, ‘see’, and ‘hear’, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The English components of semantic primitive (Wierzbicka, 1996).

Component	Example
Substantive	I, you, someone, people/person, something/thing, body
Substantive relational	kind, part
Determiner quantifier	this, the same, other/else
Quantifier	one, two, much/many, some, all
Evaluative	good, bad
Description	big, small
Mental predicate	think, know, want, feel, see, hear
Speech	say, words, true
Agent/patient	do, happen, move, touch
Existence and possession	be (somewhere); there is/exist, have, be (someone/something)
Life and death	live, die
Time	when/time, now, before, after, a long time, a short time, for some time, moment
Place	where/place, here above, below, far, near, side, inside
Causation	not, maybe, can, because, if

Table 1 continued...

Intensifier	very, more
Similarity	like/as

Additionally, according to Mulyadi and Siregar (2006), to apply the NSM theory, there are several steps to be followed. First, the researcher determines the natural meaning of the words under analysis. Second, they identify the exact polysemy of the meaning. Third, they reveal other semantic properties in the meaning of the word accompanied by syntactic and semantic evidence. Fourth, they compare the semantic properties of multilingual words considered relevant, paying attention to the similarities and differences in their meanings. Fifth, they form a syntax of universal meaning based on the identified semantic properties. Finally, they paraphrase the meaning of these words.

2.1.1 Semantic molecule

The concept of animal meaning in this research also used semantic molecules to paraphrase the meaning of animals, which can be challenging to formulate solely based on semantic primitives. According to NSM research, some kinds of concepts (emotions, values, speech acts, and interpersonal relations) are semantically much simpler than others (artifacts, animals and plants, and many human activities) because the former can be explicated directly in terms of semantic primes (Goddard, 2009). The semantic molecule is a packet of semantic components that exist as the meaning of a lexical unit (Goddard, 2009). It is a linguistic concept that helps to understand how words and phrases convey meaning. These components can include things like the definition, connotation, and associations of a word, allowing for a deeper understanding of its semantic properties. The semantic molecule is denoted using the notation (M).

At the current early stage of research, there are several productive semantic molecules, yet the conclusion is not entirely clear at this point. For English, at least the following categories are known (examples given are non-exhaustive): (a) parts of the body (i.e., hands, mouth, legs), (b) physical descriptors (i.e., long, round, flat, hard, sharp, straight), (c) physical activities (i.e., eat, drink, sit), (d) physical acts (kill, pick up, catch), (e) expressive/communicative actions (i.e., laugh, sing, write, read), (f) ethnogeometrical terms (edges, ends), (g) life-form words (i.e., animal, bird, fish, tree), (h) natural environment (i.e., the ground, the sky, the sun, water, fire, day, night), (i) materials (i.e., wood, stone, metal, glass, paper), (j) mechanical parts (i.e., wheel, pipe, wire, engine, electricity, machine), (k) basic social categories and kin roles (i.e., men, women, children, mother, father), and (l) important cultural concepts (i.e., money, book, color, number) (Goddard, 2009).

2.2 Taboo Language

The term taboo, according to Allan and Burridge (2006), refers to a prohibition of behavior within a certain community at a certain time and in a certain context. The term taboo appears and is used about certain customs in certain places. Allan and Burridge (2006) argue that taboo originally arose out of respect for and fear of metaphysical power. Still, that taboo has now extended to political and social affairs

and generalized to the prohibition of any use or practice, especially expressions or topics considered offensive, to be avoided or prohibited by social habits. The taboo is the interaction between an individual and a particular group of people or, perhaps, an entire society.

Furthermore, according to [Wardhaugh \(1986\)](#), the term taboo refers to what is forbidden to talk about, touch, or behave according to religion, custom, or community culture. [Wardhaugh \(1986\)](#) further explains that taboo is the way a society expresses disapproval of certain types of behavior that are believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reasons or because such behavior is considered to violate the moral code ([Wardhaugh, 1986](#)).

Furthermore, [Ullmann \(1977\)](#) divides taboo into three categories: taboo of fear, taboo of delicacy, and taboo of respect. The taboo of fear involves a prohibition of words about something mentioned, where the context can cause harm, bad luck, and even death ([Ullmann, 1977](#)). The taboo of fear is generally driven by culture. For example, in the Shona culture in Africa, one should not peel the bark off a tree that someone else has peeled. If someone broke this rule, bad luck would befall his mother ([Chigidi, 2009](#)). Secondly, the taboo of delicacy or refining taboo relates to the prohibition of words related to certain diseases ([Ullmann, 1977](#)). Taboo in this category represents a human effort to avoid pointing directly to unpleasant things, such as various diseases and death. The taboo of respect is related to gender ([Ullmann, 1977](#)). For example, in most European countries during the 1950s, women were banned from smoking.

Furthermore, [Allan and Burrige \(2006\)](#) divide taboos into several types: dirty word taboo, bad language, name and addressing taboo, and unfortunate conditions, as shown in Figure 2. [Allan and Burrige \(2006\)](#) defined dirty words as those related to excrement and falling within the same semantic field as meaning like rudeness, evil, uncleanness, unhealthiness, chaos, dirt, pollution, and stains. Something described as dirty can also be characterized as rude, evil, dirty, unclean, unhealthy, obscene, seedy, or rotten. Bad language consists of three categories: jargon, slang, and swearing words. Swearing words further include equating a person with an animal that are considered derogatory, such as calling someone a bat, cat, fox, pig, cow, bitch, dog, mutt, pig, flea, dove, eagle, chicken, turkey, rat, rabbit, bull, ox, goat, monkey, monkey, donkey/donkey, rat, snake, etc. Naming and addressing are related to the taboo of names. In the Chinese culture, for instance, most Chinese families prohibit children from addressing their parents or elders by their given names. It is considered taboo for younger people to share the same name as their parents or to have names that are homophonic or similar characters. Violating these norms would be deemed 'unfaithful' and 'abusive' ([Mengxun, 2020](#)). The last aspects of human misfortune are divided into several sub-groups, such as (i) illness, (ii) death, and (iii) murder. [Allan and Burrige \(2006\)](#) say that illness, death, and murder are part of fate or destiny that a person must accept.

3. METHODS

This study used a qualitative research design. According to [Creswell \(2014\)](#), qualitative research seeks to explore and understand the meaning of several individuals or groups of people in the context of social issues and beyond. This research also uses

the phenomenology approach. Bungin (2007) states that phenomenology serves as the foundational theory in qualitative research. Being field research, the data is directly collected from the research location where native speakers of the language studied live. In this case, the researcher chose two research locations, Langsa City and Peureulak District in East Aceh, Indonesia.

The data of this research consists of taboo words, phrases, or sentences in an Acehese language. The data collection procedure involved in-depth interviews to gather detailed information on the taboos. Interviews play a crucial role in research, serving as a means to gather data and observe the interviewee's behavior, personality, and beliefs (Sachan et al., 2012). The interviewer's role is to guide the conversation, ensure the participant's comfort, and maintain the interview's structure (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Accordingly, a number of 12 informants participated in this research, of which six were from Langsa and another six were from Peureulak. These informants were aged between 21-80 years old and spoke Acehese as their first language. These criteria were important to ensure that they are native speakers of Acehese, reside in Aceh, and have used this language all their lifetime. Table 2 shows the data of the informants interviewed for this research, obtained with consent from each one. Each interview took place at the informants' homes, and each interview lasted for about 30 to 40 minutes. The interview sessions were recorded with a handphone. The results of the interviews were transcribed by the researchers.

Table 2. Data of the informants.

No.	Initial	Age	Education	Occupation	Residence	First language
1.	MNB	80	Bachelor's degree	Imam at a mosque/Retired civil servant	Langsa	Acehnese
2.	MH	68	Diploma	Civil servant	Langsa	Acehnese
3.	RJ	68	Diploma	Retired civil servant	Langsa	Acehnese
4.	FH	75	Diploma	Imam at a mosque	Langsa	Acehnese
5.	OA	45	Bachelor's degree	Civil servant	Langsa	Acehnese
6.	OM	21	High school	University student	Langsa	Acehnese
7.	MJ	61	Bachelor's degree	Retired civil servant	Peureulak	Acehnese
8.	ZA	55	High school	Retired civil servant	Peureulak	Acehnese
9.	SA	70	High school	Retired civil servant	Peureulak	Acehnese
10.	RN	45	Diploma	Village chief	Peureulak	Acehnese
11.	HI	60	High school	Fisherman	Peureulak	Acehnese
12.	UT	21	High school	University student	Peureulak	Acehnese

Techniques of data analysis were carried out by using *padan* and *agih* (Sudaryanto, 2015, p. 18). The *padan* method involves external determinants, not becoming part of the language. The analysis technique for the *padan* method includes determining the element sorting technique or referential sorting power. In this study, the data were sorted according to taboo categories.

Table 3. Application of determining element by sorting technique (Sudaryanto, 2015).

Categorization	Animals name
Taboo of swearing	<i>bui</i> 'pig'
Taboo of fear	<i>rimueng</i> 'tiger'

The *agih* method is a part of the language itself (Sudaryanto, 2015). In this study, paraphrasing techniques were used in analyzing data, allowing researchers to discern the meaning of taboos, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Application of paraphrasing technique.

Animals' taboo of fear, such as <i>rimueng</i> 'tiger'	When I see some kind of this animal (M) in somewhere It's not good to say something to this kind of animal If someone (x) does something to say something bad or good to something of a kind animal (M) somewhere Something bad will happen to someone (x) Therefore, if something of this kind (animal) is heard, it will move at the same time in this place according to the wish of this animal. Because of that, something bad will happen Something this kind of animal will do something bad to someone It is good to say something else to this kind of animal (M) somewhere
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The meaning of taboo in the Acehese language was unveiled by analyzing meaning using the theory of NSM, which is recognized as a relatively modern approach to semantic study capable of producing adequate meaning analysis. Using explanatory techniques, the results of the meaning analysis in a language align with the postulate of semantic science, asserting a one-to-one relationship between form and meaning. This approach prevents the attribution of meaning to words that center around one lexicon (Sudipa, 2005). The meaning of animal taboo language in this study is a configuration of semantic primitive and is not determined by the meaning of other words in the lexicon. The expression of taboo animals' names is done by paraphrasing using semantic primitive components.

4. RESULTS

This section reveals the meanings of taboo words associated with animals in Acehese culture. The Acehese believe that employing alternative names for animals promotes friendship and showcases human appreciation and respect for their presence in human life. Notably, not all animals are considered taboo; only specific names are deemed forbidden, as classified in Table 5.

Table 5. Categorization of animal's taboo name.

Categorization	Animals name
Taboo of swearing	<i>bui</i> 'pig' <i>asèe</i> 'dog' <i>pa'ee</i> 'gecko' <i>murua</i> 'monitor lizard' <i>lemo</i> 'cow'
Taboo of fear	<i>rimueng</i> 'tiger' <i>gajah</i> 'elephant' <i>buya</i> 'crocodile' <i>badeuk</i> 'rhinoceros' <i>uleue</i> 'snake' <i>tikôh</i> 'rat'

There are five animals with taboo names associated with swearing use in Acehese cultures, such as *bui* ‘pig’, *asèe* ‘dog,’ *uleue* ‘snake’, *murua* ‘monitor lizard’, *lemo* ‘cow’, and *pa’ee* ‘gecko’. Additionally, there are six animals with taboo names related to fear, forbidden to use in Acehese culture: *rimueng* ‘tiger’, *gajah* ‘elephant’, *badeuk* ‘rhinoceros’, *uleue* ‘snake’, *buya* ‘crocodile’, and *tikôh* ‘rat’. Each is explained in the next sub-sections.

4.1 Animals Related to the Taboo of Swearing

4.1.1 *Bui* ‘pig’

The semantic primitive *bui* ‘pig’ derives from the substantive elements ‘something’, relational ‘kind’, and evaluating ‘bad’. In this case, *bui* ‘pig’ is used to symbolize someone, and if someone utters this taboo name, they feel something good/bad. The syntactic pattern formed is X says something because he feels ‘something’. Then, something that is felt can be good or bad. Thus, when combined with the speech element, the pattern of meaning becomes ‘X says Y is like kind of Z’. An example of expressing this taboo name can be seen in (3):

- (3) *Lagèe bui akai kah*
 like pig behave 2nd SP
 ‘You are like a pig’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in the animal *bui* ‘pig’, the paraphrasing of meaning is carried out as follows:

At that time, X said something. Because X feels something and thinks about Y:
 Y did something bad; I don’t want Y to do something like this;
 When X thinks like this,
 X feels something bad,
 X feels Y is a bad person,
 X feels Y like kind of Z.
 Therefore, Y feels something bad about X,
 X said something like this

4.1.2 *Asèe* ‘dog’

Asèe ‘dog’ also expresses the semantic primitive derived from substantive elements symbolizing ‘something’, relational ‘kind’, and evaluating ‘bad’. In this case, *asèe* ‘dog’ is used to symbolize someone. Someone who said the animal taboo names feels something good/bad, so the syntactic pattern that is formed is that X says something because he feels something. Then, something that is felt can be good or bad. Thus, when combined with the speech element, the pattern of meaning becomes X says Y like kind of Z. An example of the expression in the sentence can be seen in (4):

- (4) *Akai jih lagèe asèe.*
 Mind 3TG like dog
 ‘He behaved like a dog’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in the animal *asèe* ‘dog’, the paraphrasing of meaning is carried out as follows:

At that time, X said something. X Feeling something, X thinks about Y:
 Y did something bad; I don't want Y to do something like this;
 When X thinks like this, X feels something bad,
 X feels Y is a bad person/people,
 X feels Y like Z.
 Therefore, Y feels something bad about X,
 X says something like this.

4.1.3 *Lemo* 'cow'

Lemo 'cow' expresses the semantic primitive derived from a substantive element, something. In this case, *lemo* 'cow' is used to symbolize someone. Someone who utters the animal's name feels something, so the syntactic pattern formed is X says something because he feels something. Then, something that is felt can be good or bad. Thus, when combined with the semantic primitive component of the speech element, a pattern of meaning becomes X says Y like Z. The following is an example of a taboo sentence and semantic structures:

- (5) *Lemo awakkah mandum*
 Cow 3JM all
 'All of you are like cows'.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in the animal *lemo* 'cow', the paraphrasing of the meaning is carried out as follows:

At that time, X said something. X Feeling something, X thinks about Y:
 Y did something bad; I don't want Y to do something like this;
 When X thinks like this, X feels something bad,
 X feels Y is a bad person,
 X feels Y did something bad, like Z,
 Therefore, Y feels something bad about X,
 X says something like this.

4.1.4 *Muruwa* 'monitor lizard'

Muruwa 'lizard' derives from the substantive elements, 'something', relational 'kind', and evaluating 'bad'. In this case, *murawa* 'monitor lizard' is used to symbolize someone. Someone who said the animal taboo names feels something good/bad, so the syntactic pattern that is formed is that X says something because he feels something. Then, something that is felt can be good or bad. Thus, when combined with the speech element, the pattern of meaning becomes 'X says Y like kind of Z'. The example of expression can be seen in (6):

- (6) *Lagak that dara nyan lagèe muruwa*
 Beautiful really girl 3rd SP DEM like a lizard
 'That girl is very beautiful, like a monitor lizard'.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in *murawa* 'monitor lizard', the paraphrasing of the meaning is carried out as follows:

At that time, X said something. X Feeling something, X thinks about Y:
 Y did something bad; I don't want Y to do something like this;

When X thinks like this, X feels something bad,
 X feels Y is a bad person,
 X feels Y did something bad, like Z,
 Therefore, Y feels something bad about X,
 X says something like this.

4.1.5 *Pa'ee* 'gecko'

Pa'ee 'gecko' derives from the substantive elements, 'something', relational 'kind,' and evaluating 'bad'. In this case, *pa'ee* 'gecko' is used to symbolize someone. Someone who said the animal taboo names feels something good/bad, so the syntactic pattern that is formed is that X says something because he feels something. Then, something that is felt can be good or bad. Thus, when combined with the speech element, namely saying, the pattern of meaning becomes X says Y like kind of Z. An example of expression can be seen in (7):

- (7) *Hai gam pa'ee*
 INTER 3rd SP gecko
 'Hi, gecko boy'.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in the animal *pa'ee* 'gecko', the paraphrasing of meaning is carried out as follows:

At that time, X said something. X feels something, and X thinks about Y:
 Y did something bad; I don't want Y to do something like this;
 When X thinks like this, X feels something bad,
 X feels Y is a bad person,
 X feels Y did something bad, like Z.
 Therefore, Y feels something bad about X,
 X says something like this.

4.2 Animals Related to the Taboo of Fear

In the realm of animal taboo names within Acehnese culture, the second category comprises creatures connected with fear. The animals falling into this category are *rimueng* 'tiger', *gajah* 'elephant', *uleue* 'snake', *badeuk* 'rhinoceros', and *tikôh* 'rat'. These animals are deemed taboo due to their association with fear, signifying a level of reverence and sacredness. The semantic primitives tied to them suggest a dual nature of being both kind and bad. The ensuing semantic meanings of these animals' taboo status in Acehnese culture underscore the cultural significance and respect attributed to creatures evoking fear.

4.2.1 *Rimueng* 'tiger'

The word *rimueng* 'tiger', expresses something bad, and this type of animal is considered taboo because of fear and respect. *Rimueng* 'tiger' has the semantic primitive of something, kind and bad. The Acehnese people respect the tiger because it has mystical values. White tigers and black tigers in several *ulama's* [Islamic scholars] graves are believed to guard the tombs. Therefore, a taboo arises, required by Acehnese ancestors, compelling individuals to refrain from mentioning or cursing tigers when entering the forest. The sentence *hanjeut ta carôt rimueng lam uteun* 'don't

curse tigers in the forest’ exemplifies this prohibition. This prohibition is in place to prevent tigers from disturbing the people going into the forest. There’s a belief that mentioning or cursing the animal’s name may lead to unfortunate events, as the animal might respond by causing harm. Instead of calling another person by this animal’s name, society suggests replacing it with *nek mbok* or *nek kaum* ‘another name to replace the word tiger’. *Nek* means ‘grandmother’, *mbok* is a title for respected and revered elder individuals and *kaum* is ‘people, community’. This belief is illustrated in (8):

- (8) *Keubit rimueng paléh, keunoe jak*
INTER tiger bad ADV come
‘Bad tiger, come here’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in ‘*rimueng*,’ paraphrasing the meaning is carried out as follows:

When X sees some kind of animal (M) in somewhere,
it’s not good to say something (name) for this type of animal.
If X says something bad or good to something of this kind (animal) in a certain place,
something bad will happen to X.
Therefore, if something of this kind (animal) hears it, it will move at the same time in this place
according to the wish of this animal.
Because of that, something bad will happen,
something of this kind of animal (M) will do something bad to X.
It is good to say something else like “*nek mbok*” or “*nek kaum*”
to this kind of animal.

4.2.2 *Gajah* ‘elephant’

Gajah ‘elephant’ has the semantic primitive of something, kind and bad. Acehese believes that the elephant is a strong animals and considers them the rightful owners of the forest, known as *yang po tempat* ‘owner of the place’. Acehese people believe that in ancient times, the king of Aceh rode elephants as their means of transportation. The respect and fear associated with elephants make it taboo to mention their names in the forest. The sayings *hanjeut ta carôt gajah lam uteun* ‘don’t curse the elephants in the forest’ and *hanjeut ta hei gajah lam uteun* ‘don’t call/mention ‘elephants’ in the forest’ exemplify this prohibition. It is essential to follow this rule to ensure that elephants are not disturbed in the forest. One must refrain from mentioning and cursing elephants when in the forest. If someone says the name of the animal or swears the name of the animal, something bad may happen to him. It is believed that the animal may come and do something bad. Instead of calling another person by this animal’s name, society suggests replacing it with *teungku rayeuk* ‘another name to replace the word elephant’. *Teungku* is a title for those who are experts or knowledgeable in the field of Islam or more devout than most people, while *rayeuk* means ‘big, large’. This taboo is illustrated in (9):

- (9) *Hai gajah paléh*
INTER elephant bad
‘Hi, bad elephant’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in *gajah* ‘elephant’, paraphrasing the meaning is carried out as follows:

When X sees some kind of animal (M) in somewhere,
it's not good to say something for this kind of animal (M).
If someone (x) does something to say something bad or good to something of a kind animal (M) somewhere,
something bad will happen to someone (x),
Therefore, if something of this kind (animal) is heard, it will move at the same time in this place according to the wish of this animal.
Because of that, something bad will happen,
something of this kind of animal will do something bad to someone.
It is good to say something else to this like “*tengku rayeuk*”
to this kind of animal (M) somewhere,

4.2.3 *Badeuk* ‘rhinoceros’

The term *badeuk*, associated with the rhinoceros, carries a semantic primitive suggesting a dual nature of being both kind and bad. According to Acehnese beliefs, uttering the name of this animal or using it in oaths may lead to negative consequences, as it is thought that the rhinoceros may somehow bring harm to the person. To avoid such risks, the society recommends using the alternative term *po mentjula* to replace the word rhinoceros, where *po* translates to ‘owner’ and *mentjula* translates to ‘horns’ in English. An example of a taboo saying related to the name of *badeuk* ‘rhinoceros’ can be seen in (10):

- (10) *Badeuk paléh*
Rhinoceros bad
‘Bad rhinoceros’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in *badeuk* ‘rhinoceros’, paraphrasing the meaning is carried out as follows:

When X sees some kind of animal (M) somewhere,
it's not good to say something about this kind of animal (M).
If someone (X) says something bad or good to something to this kind of animal (M) somewhere,
something bad will happen to (X).
Because of that, something bad will happen to X
something of this kind of animal will do something bad to someone (X).
It is good to say something else like “*po mentjula*”
to this kind of animal (M) somewhere.

4.2.4 *Uleue* ‘snake’

Uleue ‘snake’ has the semantic primitive of something, kind and not good/bad. If someone mentions *uleue* ‘snake’ in the forest, it is believed that bad things will happen. The Acehnese view *uleue* as a wild and easily provoked animal and has a heightened sensitivity to hearing. This instills fear in humans encountering snakes in the forest, as provoking the snake’s anger is deemed perilous. The Acehnese say *hanjeut ta hei uleue lam uteun* ‘don’t call out the name of the snake in the forest’. Instead of calling another person by this animal’s name, the society suggests replacing it with *ukheu kayèe* ‘another name to replace the word rhinoceros’. *Ukheu* means

‘roots’, while *kayèe* is ‘wood’. The example of the expression embodying this taboo can be seen in (11):

- (11) *That raya uleue nyan*
very big snake DEM
‘That snake is very big’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in *uleue*, paraphrasing the meaning is carried out as follows:

When I see some kind of this animal (M) in somewhere,
it’s not good to say something to this kind of animal.
If someone (x) does something to say something bad or good to something of a kind animal (M)
somewhere,
something bad will happen to someone (X).
Therefore, if something of this kind (animal) is heard, it will move at the same time in this place
according to the wish of this animal.
Because of that, something bad will happen
something this kind of animal will do something bad to someone.
It is good to say something else like “*ukhe kayèe*”
to this kind of animal.

4.2.5 *Buya* ‘crocodile’

The Acehese cultural belief regarding the term *buya* associates it with something formidable and malevolent, as it carries the semantic primitive of being both kind and bad. According to Acehese beliefs, invoking the name of the crocodile may attract aggression towards the person mentioning it. To avoid this, the society recommends using alternative terms like *pang ulèe* for the crocodile on land and *raja laôt* for the crocodile in the river. In Acehese, the term *pang* is derived from two words: *pawang*, meaning ‘guardian’ or ‘caretaker’, and *panglima*, meaning ‘commander’ or ‘military commander’. Additionally, *ulèe* translates to ‘head’, *raja* to ‘king’, and *laôt* to ‘sea’ or ‘ocean’ in English. An example of expression embodying this taboo can be found in (12):

- (12) *Buya panyang ikue, glie that hi*
Crocodile’s long tail disgusting very appearance
‘The long-tailed crocodile is very disgusting’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in *buya* ‘crocodile,’ paraphrasing the meaning is carried out as follows:

When X sees some kind of animal (M) somewhere,
it’s not good to say something about this kind of animal (M).
If someone (X) says something bad or good to something to this kind of animal (M) somewhere,
something bad will happen to (X).
Because of that, something bad will happen to X
something of this kind of animal will do something bad to someone (X).
It is good to say something else like “*pang ulèe*” or “*raja laôt*”
to this kind of animal (M) somewhere.

4.2.6 *Tikôh* ‘rat’

Tikôh referring to a rat, encompasses a semantic primitive denoting a dual nature of being both kind and bad. In Acehese culture, it is firmly believed that scolding or cursing rats is strictly prohibited, particularly when farmers witness them attacking plants or homeowners observe them damaging clothes and food. Instead of reprimanding rats, individuals are advised to use alternative names such as *po ti* or *nyak ti metuwah*, where *po* signifies ‘elder sister’, and *ti* is an abbreviation of *tikôh*. While *nyak* is ‘mother’, *ti* is from *tikôh* ‘rat’ and *metuwah* is ‘he/she who encompasses positive attributes’. Scolding rats is thought to worsen their mischievous behavior, whether in fields where they continuously devour plants or at home where they persistently disrupt and damage household items. The saying *hanjeut ta carôt tikôh lam blang atawa di rumoh* exemplifies this prohibition, meaning ‘you can’t swear at rats in the fields or at home’. Expressions reflecting these taboos can be found in example (13).

- (13) *Tikôh kureueng aja hana utak, leupah le ka pajôh padée*
 Rat damn no brain too much 2SP eat paddy
 ‘The insolent rat has no mind after eating too much of my paddy’.

Furthermore, to show the semantic meaning contained in *tikôh* ‘rat’, paraphrasing the meaning is carried out as follows:

When someone (X) sees something to this kind of this animal (M),
 it’s not good to say this: “*bit tikôh paléh*” a very bad rat’.
 If any kind (animal) can hear (X), something bad will happen to (X),
 this kind of animal (M) will do something bad to (X)
 It is good if (X) says something nice to this kind of animal (M) like this:
 “*Nyak ti metuwah ka wèh keudéh*” ‘oh good rat, go away please!’

5. DISCUSSION

The meaning of animal taboo language in this study is configured by paraphrasing semantic primitive components. Wierzbicka (1996) mentions that there are 66 components of the semantic primitive in the English Language. The Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) is a compositional system of meaning representation based on empirically established universal semantic primes, i.e., simple indefinable meanings that appear to be present as word meanings in all languages (Goddard, 2008; Wierzbicka, 1996).

The findings showed that animal taboos in Acehese are categorized into two: taboo of swearing and taboo of fear. The first one is prohibited because it is considered a form of swearing and offensive, which has a bad meaning and should be avoided by Acehese speakers. The second one is taboo because of fear, due to the respect the Acehese has for those animals. The identified categories align with the concepts of taboo proposed by Ullmann (1977) and Allan and Burridge (2006) on the classification of offensive language, emphasizing its contextual and culturally embedded nature.

The first category, the animal taboo that is associated with swearing, corresponds to the concept proposed by Allan and Burridge (2006), who categorize the term into bad language consisting of three categories: jargon, slang, and swear words. Swear

words include equating a person with an animal, whereby in the Acehese culture, these animals are *bui* ‘pig’, *asèe* ‘dog’, *pa’ee* ‘gecko’, *murua* ‘monitor lizard’, and *lemo* ‘cow’. These animal-related swear words not only highlight the cultural specificity of linguistic taboos but also provide insights into how they are strongly embedded into identity, and become symbolic even without providing any benefits to members of the society (Fershtman et al., 2011).

The second category identified aligns with the concept proposed by Ullmann (1977). Ullmann mentions three categories of taboo: taboo of fear, taboo of delicacy, and taboo of respect. One of them is the taboo of fear which is found in this research. The taboo of fear is generally driven by culture (Fershtman et al., 2011). This taboo arises due to the perceived holiness and sacredness of certain animals, invoking fear and respect, leading to the prohibition of mentioning their names. The examples identified in this research are *rimueng* ‘tiger’, *gajah* ‘elephant’, *buya* ‘crocodile’, *badeuk* ‘rhinoceros’, *uleue* ‘snake’, and *tikôh* ‘rat’. In natural settings like the forest and by the river, the Acehese says that it is forbidden to mention these animals as they are believed to understand human feelings. To show respect, alternative names are used, such as *nek mbok* or *nek kaum* for a tiger, *tengku rayeuk* for an elephant, *pang ulèe* or *raja laôt* for a crocodile, *po mentjula* for a rhinoceros, *ukheu kayèe* for a snake, and *po ti* or *nyak ti metuwah* for a rat. And so, the Acehese believe that when humans protect and respect nature, nature will make it easier for humans to live and work. This belief is also as coined by Martin et al (2016) that “nature and natural entities have their own dynamics and their own goods that are independent of human purposes, and they deserve a certain kind of moral respect” (p. 6107).

According to the Acehese, it is advisable to refrain from using taboo words in public to prevent conflicts between speakers, and violating these taboos may result in social consequences (Aziz et al., 2020). These taboos ensure a certain level of security for the members of the society, contributing to the assurance that the society will continue to exist and function (Fershtman et al., 2011). An example can be seen in the Shona culture in Africa, one should not peel the bark off a tree that someone else has peeled. If someone broke this rule, they say that bad luck would befall his mother (Chigidi, 2009). Similarly, in Chinese culture, the Chinese avoid the number four because it sounds the same as the word for death (Mengxun, 2020). All numbers, including telephone numbers, plate numbers, and door numbers, are not numbered with four. The month of May, in Chinese culture, is considered the evil month (Mengxun, 2020).

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the meaning of animal taboo language in Acehese culture, employing a semantic primitive approach based on the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM). The identified categories of animal taboos include the taboo of swearing and the taboo of fear. The taboo of the swearing category involves offensive language, specifically swear words equating individuals with animals like *bui* ‘pig’, *asèe* ‘dog’, *pa’ee* ‘gecko’, *murua* ‘monitor lizard’, and *lemo* ‘cow’. These animal-related swear words underscore the cultural specificity and symbolic nature of linguistic taboos embedded in identity. The taboo of fear category, rooted in cultural beliefs, deems certain animals sacred and prohibits mentioning their names in natural

settings. These animals are *rimueng* ‘tiger’, *gajah* ‘elephant’, *buya* ‘crocodile’, *badeuk* ‘rhinoceros’, *uleue* ‘snake’ and *tikôh* ‘rat’. The Acehnese use alternative names to show respect, reflecting a belief that respecting nature facilitates harmonious living, such as *nek mbok* or *nek kaum* for a tiger, *tengku rayeuk* for an elephant, *pang ulèe* or *raja laôt* for a crocodile, *po mentjula* for a rhinoceros, *ukheu kayèe* for a snake, and *po ti* or *nyak ti metuwah* for a rat. Taboo words are advised to be avoided in public to prevent conflicts, and violating them may lead to social consequences, contributing to societal security and ensuring its continuity.

While this study has described and explained the category of animal taboos and their meanings within Acehnese culture in Langsa City and East Aceh Regency, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The research provides a foundational understanding of the topic, but there is a need for further in-depth investigations to enhance comprehension. Future studies should explore additional categories of taboo language and delve specifically into cultural aspects related to language use. The researchers encourage language practitioners, particularly those from the Acehnese community, to apply the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory in their studies on language meaning. This theoretical framework, offering a comprehensive insight into the meaning, can unveil semantic distinctions and paraphrases associated with various instances of animal taboo language in Acehnese society. Implementing the NSM theory represents a complex and valuable approach within the field of semantics.

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