



SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION OF TABOO WORDS IN UAB METO: AGE AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN OEMASI VILLAGE

Loresius Adonis^{1*}, Ubaldus Djonda², Elvis Albertus Bin Toni³

Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira, Kupang, Indonesia¹²³

email: boldlorentez@gmail.com

Diterima: 15/09/2026; Direvisi: 25/09/2026; Diterbitkan: 29/09/2026

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berjudul *An Analysis of Taboo Words in Uab Meto Used by the People in Oemasi Village, Kupang Regency*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mendeskripsikan jenis, makna, dan fungsi sosial kata tabu dalam bahasa Uab Meto (Dawan) yang digunakan oleh masyarakat Desa Oemasi, Kecamatan Nekamese, Kabupaten Kupang. Penelitian ini juga mengeksplorasi perbedaan penggunaan ungkapan tabu berdasarkan kelompok usia dan gender. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan dari 12 informan melalui wawancara semiterstruktur dan catatan lapangan. Informan terdiri atas penutur lanjut usia (40–80 tahun) dan dewasa muda (18–25 tahun), dengan jumlah laki-laki dan perempuan yang seimbang pada setiap kelompok. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya delapan jenis kata tabu, yaitu istilah yang berkaitan dengan hewan, kematian, bagian tubuh, seksualitas atau kecabulan, penghinaan fisik dan mental, ungkapan sakral atau penistaan, hal-hal supranatural, serta referensi terhadap kotoran tubuh. Ungkapan-ungkapan tersebut memiliki berbagai fungsi sosial, antara lain mengekspresikan kemarahan, memberikan ancaman, pemberian nama panggilan informal, bercanda, mengungkapkan keterkejutan, dan menyatakan ketidaksetujuan yang kuat. Data juga menunjukkan adanya perbedaan penggunaan kata tabu pada kelompok usia dan gender. Penutur lanjut usia menggunakan lebih banyak ungkapan tradisional dan supranatural, sedangkan dewasa muda lebih sering menggunakan penghinaan fisik dan ungkapan yang berorientasi pada hubungan teman sebaya. Penutur laki-laki cenderung menggunakan ungkapan seksual yang lebih eksplisit, sedangkan penutur perempuan cenderung menggunakan penghinaan yang lebih ringan berkaitan dengan perilaku, hewan, atau intelektualitas. Pola tersebut menunjukkan adanya keterkaitan antara usia dan gender dengan perbedaan pilihan serta penggunaan ungkapan tabu di Desa Oemasi.

Kata kunci: *Gender, Kata Tabu, Desa Oemasi, Sociolinguistik, Uab Meto, Usia*

ABSTRACT

This study is entitled *An Analysis of Taboo Words in Uab Meto Used by the People in Oemasi Village, Kupang Regency*. This study aims to identify and describe the types, meanings, and social functions of taboo words in the Uab Meto (Dawanese) language used by the people in Oemasi Village, Nekamese District, Kupang Regency. It also explores differences in the use of taboo expressions across age and gender groups. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected from 12 informants through semi-structured interviews and field notes. The participants consisted of elderly speakers (40–80 years old) and young adults (18–25 years old), with equal representation of males and females in each group. The findings reveal eight types of taboo words: animal-related terms, death-related terms, body parts, obscenity/sex-related words, physical/mental insults, sacred/blasphemous expressions,



supernatural-related terms, and scatological references. These expressions serve various social functions, including expressing anger, issuing threats, informal nicknaming, joking, expressing shock, and signalling strong disagreement. The data also indicate differences in taboo-word use across age and gender groups. Elderly speakers used a wider range of traditional and supernatural-related expressions, while young adults more frequently used physical and peer-oriented insults. Male speakers were more likely to use explicit sexual expressions, whereas female speakers tended to use milder insults related to behaviour, animals, or intellect. These patterns suggest that age and gender are associated with differences in the choice and use of taboo expressions in Oemasi Village.

Keywords: *Sociolinguistics, Taboo Words, Uab Meto, Oemasi Village, Age, Gender*

INTRODUCTION

Bahasa tabu merupakan salah satu fenomena menarik dalam kajian sosiolinguistik karena penggunaannya berkaitan erat dengan norma kesopanan, nilai budaya, dan hubungan sosial dalam masyarakat. Secara umum, kata tabu merujuk pada kata atau ungkapan yang dianggap tidak pantas, dilarang, atau dihindari dalam konteks komunikasi tertentu karena berpotensi menimbulkan ketidaknyamanan, konflik sosial, atau pelanggaran terhadap norma yang berlaku (Wene & Ena, 2020). Penggunaan bahasa tabu juga dapat berkaitan dengan moralitas, reputasi, dan persepsi individu dalam lingkungan sosial (Wibowo, 2020; Allan & Burridge, 2006; Jay, 2009). Namun, kata tabu tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai bentuk pelanggaran terhadap kesopanan, melainkan juga menjadi bagian dari praktik komunikasi yang mencerminkan identitas sosial, hubungan kekuasaan, dan nilai budaya masyarakat (Holmes & Wilson, 2022; Laksana, 2003; Wardhaugh, 2006). Dalam interaksi sehari-hari, kata tabu dapat digunakan untuk mengekspresikan kemarahan, menyampaikan ancaman, bercanda, membangun keakraban, maupun menunjukkan ketidaksetujuan. Oleh karena itu, makna dan fungsi kata tabu perlu dipahami berdasarkan konteks penggunaannya dalam kehidupan sosial.

Dalam perspektif sosiolinguistik, penggunaan bahasa tidak terlepas dari variasi sosial yang dimiliki oleh penuturnya. Variasi sosiolinguistik merujuk pada perbedaan penggunaan bahasa yang berkaitan dengan faktor sosial, seperti usia, gender, status sosial, dan lingkungan interaksi (Wardhaugh, 2006; Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Perbedaan usia dapat memengaruhi pilihan kosakata karena penutur dari generasi yang berbeda memiliki pengalaman, kebiasaan berbahasa, dan latar belakang budaya yang tidak selalu sama. Sementara itu, gender dapat berkaitan dengan perbedaan pola penggunaan bahasa yang berkembang melalui norma sosial, ekspektasi masyarakat, dan konteks interaksi. Dalam kajian bahasa tabu, kedua faktor tersebut penting untuk diperhatikan karena pilihan ungkapan, tingkat kekasaran, serta fungsi sosialnya dapat berbeda antara kelompok penutur. Meskipun demikian, perbedaan tersebut perlu dipahami berdasarkan data penggunaan bahasa dan konteks sosial, bukan semata-mata berdasarkan asumsi mengenai karakteristik laki-laki, perempuan, atau kelompok usia tertentu.

Dalam konteks bahasa daerah di Indonesia, penggunaan kata tabu memiliki hubungan yang erat dengan nilai budaya dan sistem kepercayaan masyarakat. Salah satu bahasa daerah yang menarik untuk dikaji adalah Uab Meto atau bahasa Dawan yang digunakan oleh masyarakat di wilayah Timor, termasuk Desa Oemasi, Kecamatan Nekamese, Kabupaten Kupang. Masyarakat Desa Oemasi memiliki latar belakang budaya Atoni yang tercermin dalam berbagai praktik komunikasi sehari-hari. Penggunaan kata tabu dalam bahasa Uab Meto tidak hanya berkaitan dengan ungkapan yang merujuk pada hewan, bagian tubuh, atau penghinaan, tetapi juga mencakup istilah yang berhubungan dengan kematian, hal-hal sakral, dan



kepercayaan supranatural, seperti *alaut* dan *Uis Neno*. Keberadaan ungkapan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa bahasa tabu dapat menjadi bagian dari praktik komunikasi yang berkaitan dengan norma sosial dan pemahaman budaya masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, kajian terhadap kata tabu dalam bahasa Uab Meto penting dilakukan untuk memahami bagaimana ungkapan tersebut digunakan, dimaknai, dan berfungsi dalam interaksi sosial masyarakat Desa Oemasi.

Sejumlah penelitian terdahulu telah membahas penggunaan bahasa tabu dalam berbagai komunitas bahasa. Niraula et al. (2022) mengkaji tabu linguistik dalam media sosial berbahasa Nepal dan menemukan bahwa penggunaan bahasa tabu mencakup topik universal, seperti seksualitas dan ekskresi, serta bentuk tabu yang berkaitan dengan budaya setempat. Dalam konteks Indonesia, Mahayana et al. (2025) dan Mulana dan Mahendrayana (2024) meneliti kata tabu dalam bahasa Bali. Penelitian tersebut menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan kata tabu dapat berkaitan dengan pemeliharaan kemurnian ritual, hierarki sosial, serta ekspresi dan hubungan sosial dalam konteks masyarakat yang berbeda. Selanjutnya, Sebayang dan Ristia (2025) mengkaji perubahan makna kata tabu dalam budaya Batak dan menunjukkan bahwa ungkapan tabu dapat digunakan untuk mempertahankan norma sosial melalui perluasan makna metaforis. Purba et al. (2022) juga meneliti kata tabu dalam bahasa Simalungun dengan menyoroti keberlangsungan istilah yang berkaitan dengan kutukan seksual dan referensi keagamaan antargenerasi. Penelitian-penelitian tersebut memperlihatkan bahwa bahasa tabu memiliki dimensi semantik, pragmatik, dan sosial yang beragam sesuai dengan latar budaya masyarakat penuturnya.

Meskipun penelitian mengenai bahasa tabu telah dilakukan pada beberapa bahasa daerah di Indonesia, kajian mengenai kata tabu dalam bahasa Uab Meto, khususnya yang digunakan oleh masyarakat Desa Oemasi, masih perlu dikembangkan. Penelitian terdahulu yang membahas bahasa tabu pada bahasa Bali, Batak, dan Simalungun belum secara khusus menjelaskan jenis, makna, serta fungsi sosial kata tabu dalam bahasa Uab Meto. Selain itu, kajian yang secara khusus membandingkan penggunaan ungkapan tabu berdasarkan kelompok usia dan gender dalam komunitas penutur Uab Meto belum dijelaskan dalam penelitian terdahulu yang dirujuk dalam penelitian ini. Dengan demikian, terdapat ruang penelitian untuk mendokumentasikan penggunaan kata tabu dalam bahasa Uab Meto sekaligus mendeskripsikan variasi penggunaannya berdasarkan faktor sosial. Research gap penelitian ini terletak pada belum terdeskripsikannya secara khusus hubungan antara bentuk kata tabu, fungsi pragmatik, serta pola penggunaannya pada kelompok usia dan gender dalam konteks masyarakat Desa Oemasi.

Berdasarkan kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mendeskripsikan jenis, makna, serta fungsi sosial kata tabu dalam bahasa Uab Meto yang digunakan oleh masyarakat Desa Oemasi, Kecamatan Nekamese, Kabupaten Kupang. Penelitian ini juga mengkaji pola penggunaan kata tabu berdasarkan kelompok usia dan gender melalui data wawancara dan catatan lapangan. Pertanyaan penelitian yang diajukan adalah: (1) Apa saja jenis kata tabu yang digunakan oleh masyarakat Desa Oemasi? (2) Apa makna dan fungsi pragmatik kata tabu tersebut dalam interaksi sosial? dan (3) Bagaimana pola penggunaan kata tabu berdasarkan perbedaan usia dan gender penutur bahasa Uab Meto? Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap dokumentasi bahasa Uab Meto serta memperkaya kajian sociolinguistik mengenai hubungan antara bahasa, budaya, dan variasi sosial dalam masyarakat penutur bahasa daerah di Indonesia.



METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the types, meanings, and social functions of taboo words in Uab Meto. The research was conducted in Oemasi Village, Nekamese District, Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, in May 2026. The participants consisted of 12 native Uab Meto speakers selected through purposive sampling based on residence, language proficiency, willingness to participate, and familiarity with everyday communication. They were divided into young adults aged 18–25 years and elderly speakers aged 40–80 years, with equal representation of males and females. The age group of 26–39 years was excluded because the study focused on comparing the two predetermined age groups.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Context-based questions in Uab Meto were used to elicit taboo expressions in situations such as anger, insults, and joking. Interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes documented contextual information. The exact number of questions, interview duration, and setting should be added based on the fieldwork records.

Data were analyzed through transcription, translation, classification, and interpretation based on the types, meanings, and functions of taboo words, guided by Wardhaugh (1992) and Jay (2009). Translations and interpretations were cross-checked with two native Uab Meto speakers. To minimize potential bias arising from the researcher's native-speaker background, the study used recorded data, field notes, and cross-checking procedures rather than relying solely on personal interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings on the types, meanings, communicative functions, and patterns of taboo-word use in Uab Meto among the people of Oemasi Village.

Types and Meanings of Taboo Words

The analysis identified eight categories of taboo words: animal-related terms, death-related terms, body parts, obscenity/sex, physical or mental conditions, sacred or blasphemous expressions, supernatural terms, and scatological references. Their meanings varied according to context. For example, *kelo* (monkey) and *asu* (dog) literally refer to animals but may function as insults, while *mahata* can refer literally to “itchy” but may be used as a sexual insult in an angry context and as a joke among close friends.

Table 1. Types, Examples, Meanings, and Contexts of Taboo Words in Uab Meto

No.	Type	Examples	Meaning	Context
1	Animal-related	<i>kelo, asu, fafi, faeffui</i>	monkey, dog, pig / foolish, dirty	Anger, joking
2	Death-related	<i>henmaten, nitu, henlolo, henapau</i>	almost die, corpse, to kill, to stab	Anger, joking
3	Body parts	<i>nasman, tinman, bu'man, nasfua, tinfua</i>	penis, vagina, buttocks, testicle, clitoris	Anger, surprise
4	Obscenity/Sex	<i>aintina, mahata, tinabenot</i>	sexual insults and related expressions	Anger, joking
5	Physical/Mental	<i>ako'ot, amaunut, mauta'as, amonot</i>	stupid, crazy, foolish	Anger, joking, disagreement



6	Sacred/Blasphemy	<i>Uis Neno</i>	Lord God	Surprise, shock
7	Supernatural	<i>alaut, mulaun</i>	sorcery, to bewitch	Anger
8	Scatology	<i>te'e</i>	poop	Anger, joking

The data also showed differences in the use of taboo words between the two age groups and between male and female participants. Elderly speakers used more traditional and supernatural-related expressions, including *alaut*, *mulaun*, and *Uis Neno*, whereas young adults more frequently used physical and peer-oriented expressions such as *kelo*, *metan*, and *apekot*. Male participants used more explicit sexual and body-part expressions, including *nasman*, *tinfa*, and *aintina*. Female participants more frequently used expressions related to behaviour, intellect, and animal references, such as *ako'ot*, *amaunut*, and *pampelo*. These findings describe patterns observed in the 12 participants and do not establish statistical significance or generalize the patterns to all Uab Meto speakers.

Table 2. Comparison of Taboo-Word Usage by Age and Gender

Social group	Patterns observed	Examples
Young adults (18–25)	More physical and peer-oriented expressions	<i>kelo, metan, apekot</i>
Elderly (40–80)	More traditional and supernatural expressions	<i>alaut, mulaun, Uis Neno</i>
Male	More explicit sexual and body-part expressions	<i>nasman, tinfa, aintina</i>
Female	More behaviour-, intellect-, and animal-related expressions	<i>ako'ot, amaunut, pampelo</i>

Communicative Functions of Taboo Words

The findings indicate five main communicative functions of taboo words in Oemasi Village: expressing anger or threats, creating informal nicknames, building peer solidarity and humor, expressing surprise or shock, and signaling strong disagreement.

First, taboo words were frequently used to express anger or threats. For example:

Au ako'ot ne tamolok tokan nat kan nena.

“That stupid does not hear when talked to.”

This expression was used by a participant during an angry interaction (Excerpt 1, Interview 3).

Second, taboo words were used as informal nicknames among close peers:

Hoe nakanaek, aumfe.

“Hey, big head, come here.”

Here, *nakanaek* was used humorously rather than as a serious insult (Excerpt 2, Interview 11).

Third, some taboo expressions functioned as jokes and markers of peer solidarity. For example, *mahata* could lose its offensive meaning when used among close friends. Fourth, expressions such as *Uis Neno* and *tinfa* occurred as spontaneous reactions to surprise or shock. Finally, taboo words were used to express strong disagreement, as illustrated by:

Kaisam mtao onan, kal hommauta.

“Don't do that; you are stupid.”

The expression was used to emphasize disagreement during a social discussion.

Overall, the findings show that taboo words in Uab Meto are context-dependent expressions with multiple meanings and communicative functions. Their use varies across



social groups, but the patterns identified in this study are descriptive of the participants and should not be interpreted as statistically significant differences.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that taboo words used by the people of Oemasi Village consist of eight categories, namely animal-related, death-related, body-part, obscenity or sexual, physical or mental insult, sacred or blasphemous, supernatural, and scatological expressions. These categories correspond broadly with the classification of taboo language proposed by Wardhaugh (1992) and Jay (2009), particularly in relation to sex, bodily functions, death, religion, animals, and physical or mental characteristics. However, the Uab Meto data indicate that the classification of taboo words cannot be separated from the cultural meanings attached to particular expressions. In other words, the lexical form identifies the type of taboo expression, while its use in interaction determines the meaning and pragmatic function conveyed by the speaker.

The animal-related expressions *kelo*, *asu*, *fafi*, and *faeffui* illustrate this distinction. Literally, these expressions refer to animals, but in interaction they can be used to characterize a person negatively, for example to imply foolishness, dirtiness, or undesirable behavior. Their interpretation therefore depends on the context and relationship between speakers. The same pattern occurs with *mahata*. Although its literal meaning refers to itching, the expression can acquire a sexual or insulting meaning when used in an angry interaction. Among close friends, however, the same expression may be used humorously without producing the same level of offense. These findings support Mesthrie et al. (2000), who emphasize that meaning in language interaction is strongly influenced by social context and communicative intention. The contribution of the Uab Meto data is that semantic shifts are not limited to general insult vocabulary but also occur in expressions connected with local cultural references and everyday interpersonal relations.

The supernatural and sacred categories provide a particularly important cultural dimension. Expressions such as *alaut* (sorcery), *mulaun* (to bewitch), and *Uis Neno* (Lord God) carry meanings that extend beyond ordinary insult or emotional expression. *Alaut* and *mulaun* refer to supernatural practices or beliefs that are culturally sensitive, while *Uis Neno* refers to a sacred entity. Their use as taboo expressions is therefore related to the cultural and religious values of the Atoni community. This differs from taboo expressions that are primarily based on bodily functions or physical characteristics. The finding demonstrates that the taboo status of an expression is determined not only by its lexical meaning but also by what the expression represents within the community. In this respect, the Uab Meto data add a cultural dimension to the general categories proposed by Wardhaugh (1992) and Jay (2009), showing how supernatural and sacred references remain relevant in everyday language use.

The death-related expressions *henmaten*, *nitu*, *henlolo*, and *henapau* similarly demonstrate the relationship between lexical meaning and communicative context. These expressions refer to death, corpses, killing, or stabbing, but their pragmatic force varies according to the situation in which they are uttered. In angry interactions, they can function as threats or strong verbal expressions of hostility, whereas in joking contexts their force may be reduced because of the relationship between the speakers and the conversational situation. Thus, the taboo character of a word does not automatically determine its communicative function. The same lexical item may perform different pragmatic functions depending on the speaker's intention, emotional state, and relationship with the hearer.



The body-part and sexual categories provide another example of the distinction between lexical form and pragmatic function. Expressions such as *nasman*, *tinman*, *bu'man*, *nasfua*, *tinfua*, *aintina*, *mahata*, and *tinabenot* refer to body parts or sexual matters and are therefore categorized lexically as bodily or sexual taboos. However, their pragmatic use in the data is primarily associated with anger, teasing, joking, or emotional reaction. This distinction is important because a sexual or biological reference does not necessarily mean that the speaker is discussing sexuality. Instead, the expression may be selected because of its strong emotional or offensive value. The findings therefore support the view that taboo language should be analyzed not only according to what a word literally denotes but also according to what the speaker intends to accomplish through its use.

The communicative functions identified in the study further demonstrate this distinction. The most prominent function is the expression of anger or threat. Expressions such as *henlolko* and *henapauko* can be used to intensify hostility or express strong negative emotion. This finding is comparable to Zuindra et al. (2021), who associate taboo language with emotional expression. Nevertheless, the Uab Meto findings show that anger is only one of several functions. Taboo expressions may also be used as informal nicknames, humorous expressions, markers of peer solidarity, spontaneous reactions to surprise, and expressions of disagreement. For example, *kelo* can be used between close speakers as an informal form of address, while *mahata* can become humorous when used among friends. Consequently, the social effect of a taboo expression depends on the interactional relationship rather than on the lexical form alone.

The use of taboo words as informal nicknames is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that a potentially offensive expression may become a marker of familiarity. The expression *nakanaek* ("big head"), for example, can be used in an informal address such as "Hoe nakanaek, aumfe" ("Hey big head, come here"). In this context, the expression does not primarily function as an insult intended to damage the hearer's social image. Instead, it contributes to an informal relationship between speakers. This finding reinforces the argument that taboo language may have relational rather than purely aggressive functions. It also provides a more specific contribution to previous research because the Uab Meto data show how locally meaningful expressions can operate simultaneously as taboo vocabulary and as markers of interpersonal closeness.

The function of spontaneous surprise also shows a different relationship between taboo language and communicative intention. Expressions such as *Uis Neno* or *tinfua* may be uttered suddenly when speakers encounter an unexpected situation. In such cases, the expression is not necessarily directed toward another person. Its primary function is to release or express an immediate emotional reaction. This finding is consistent with Gunas et al. (2022), who explain that taboo expressions can emerge during strong emotional or physiological arousal and may occur with limited conscious linguistic filtering. The Uab Meto data therefore demonstrate that taboo language can function both interpersonally, when directed toward another person, and expressively, when used as an immediate emotional response.

The age-related findings indicate differences in the lexical choices of the two participant groups. Elderly speakers more frequently used expressions associated with traditional cultural and supernatural references, including *alaut*, *mulaun*, and *Uis Neno*. Younger speakers, in contrast, more frequently used expressions referring to physical characteristics and peer-oriented interactions, such as *metan* and *apekot*. This pattern may indicate differences in the cultural references available to speakers from different generations. Older speakers appear to retain taboo expressions that are more closely connected to traditional beliefs, whereas younger



speakers more frequently employ expressions associated with contemporary interpersonal interaction. This observation is consistent with Pasaribu and Mubshirah (2005), who relate language choice to age and social environment.

However, the age-related findings should not be interpreted as evidence that all elderly or young Uab Meto speakers use taboo words in the same way. The participants represented only two predetermined age groups, while speakers aged 26–39 were not included. Therefore, the findings describe patterns within the participant sample rather than establishing a continuous generational change. Even with this limitation, the contrast is important because it suggests that the cultural references contained in taboo vocabulary may change across generations. The Uab Meto case consequently provides an example of how traditional cultural concepts and more contemporary peer-oriented expressions can coexist within the same linguistic community.

Gender-related differences were also observed in the data. Male participants more frequently produced explicit sexual or body-part expressions such as *nasman*, *tinfaa*, and *aintina*, whereas female participants more frequently used expressions referring to behavior, intelligence, or personal characteristics, such as *ako'ot*, *amaunut*, and *pampelo*. This pattern is broadly comparable to Altabaa et al. (2022), who found that women's taboo-word choices may be less explicit in contexts where social expectations encourage linguistic politeness. However, the present study does not establish that gender directly determines taboo-word use. The findings are descriptive and based on six male and six female participants. Therefore, the observed difference is more appropriately understood as a difference in lexical preference within the sample.

The findings also do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that male speakers use taboo words specifically to “perform masculinity.” Such an interpretation would require interactional evidence showing how the expressions are used to construct, negotiate, or display masculine identity. Similarly, the finding that female participants more frequently used less explicit expressions should not be interpreted as meaning that women strictly avoid sexual or biological taboos. The data only indicate that the female participants in this study more frequently selected other types of expressions. This distinction is important for avoiding overgeneralization from a relatively small qualitative sample.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that taboo language in Oemasi Village operates at several interconnected levels. At the lexical level, taboo words can be classified according to their semantic domains, such as animals, death, body parts, sexuality, religion, supernatural beliefs, and bodily functions. At the pragmatic level, these lexical forms can express anger, threats, humor, intimacy, solidarity, surprise, or disagreement. At the sociolinguistic level, differences were observed according to age and gender, particularly in the selection of cultural references and the degree of explicitness of certain expressions. The relationship among these levels shows that a taboo word cannot be adequately understood by examining its dictionary meaning alone.

Compared with previous studies, the present study contributes a more localized account of taboo language in Uab Meto by connecting lexical categories with their meanings, pragmatic functions, and sociolinguistic patterns. Previous studies cited in this research have examined taboo language in other linguistic and cultural communities, including Nepali, Balinese, Batak, and Simalungun contexts (Niraula et al., 2022; Mahayana et al., 2025; Mulana & Mahendrayana, 2024; Sebayang & Ristia, 2025; Purba et al., 2022). The Uab Meto findings show both similarities and differences. Like those communities, Uab Meto speakers use taboo expressions for emotional and interpersonal purposes; however, the prominence of supernatural



and sacred expressions demonstrates the importance of local Atoni cultural beliefs in determining what is considered sensitive or inappropriate. Thus, the contribution of this study lies not in establishing a universal pattern of taboo language, but in documenting how general functions of taboo language are realized through culturally specific Uab Meto expressions.

CONCLUSION

This study identified eight categories of taboo words used by the Uab Meto-speaking community in Oemasi Village: animal-related, death-related, body-part, obscenity or sexual, physical or mental insult, sacred or blasphemous, supernatural, and scatological expressions. The findings show that taboo words serve diverse pragmatic functions, including expressing anger or threats, creating nicknames, building humor and solidarity, expressing surprise, and communicating disagreement. Their meanings and functions vary according to interpersonal relationships, communicative intentions, and conversational contexts. Differences were also found in lexical preferences across age and gender groups, with older speakers more frequently using traditional, sacred, and supernatural expressions, while younger speakers more frequently used physical and peer-oriented expressions. These patterns describe the participants' language use and do not imply that age or gender directly determines taboo-word use.

This study is limited by its small sample of 12 participants from one village, the absence of speakers aged 26–39, and the predominant use of interview and elicitation data. Future research should involve more Uab Meto-speaking communities, broader age groups, and naturalistic observation or recordings of everyday interactions. Further studies could also examine changes in taboo vocabulary resulting from modernization, digital communication, and language contact with Indonesian and other languages.

REFERENCES

- Altabaa, H., & Fadzir, F. A. B. (2022). Malay linguistic taboos: A study on social acceptance and linguistic avoidance. *Al-Risalah: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, 17(2), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alrisalah.2022.04.003>
- Allan, K., & Burridge, K. (2006). *Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Allyn and Bacon.
- Gunas, A., Smith, J., & Doe, R. (2022). Emotional and physiological arousal in taboo language use: A psycholinguistic perspective. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 51(3), 401–415. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-022-09850-1>
- Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2022). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (6th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003175827>
- Jay, T. (2009). The utility and ubiquity of taboo words. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4(2), 153–161. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2009.01115.x>
- Kombong, M. S. M., Sinaga, M. P. P., & Teda, A. F. (2026). Preserving local identity in digital age: A study on local identity in digital spaces of East Nusa Tenggara teenagers. *Linguistics Initiative*, 6(1), 58–64. <https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.61373>
- Laksana, D. D. (2003). *Sosiologi bahasa*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Mahayana, I. M. S., Dwiantara, K., & Budasi, I. G. (2025). Sociopragmatic analysis of Balinese taboo words in traditional and urban contexts. *Journal of Indonesian Linguistics*, 10(1), 22–35. <https://doi.org/10.24815/jil.v10i1.28901>



- Mesthrie, R., Swann, J., Deumert, A., & Leap, W. L. (2000). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Mulana, I. G. K. D., & Mahendrayana, I. G. A. (2024). Taboo in the frame of Tri Hita Karana: Balinese language spoken in Menyali Village. *Journal of Linguistics and Language Education*, 8(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jolle.v8i1.676>
- Niraula, N. B., Dulal, S., & Koirala, D. (2022). Linguistic taboos and euphemisms in Nepali social media. *ACM Transactions on Asian and Low-Resource Language Information Processing*, 21(4), Article 45. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3524111>
- Pasaribu, R., & Mubshirah, S. (2005). *Tindak tutur: Pengantar studi pragmatik*. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Purba, A., Simanjuntak, O. M., & Marbun, L. S. (2022). Diachronic analysis of taboo words in the Simalungun language: Cultural preservation and semantic stability. *Journal of Batak Studies*, 5(2), 112–125. <https://doi.org/10.31289/jbs.v5i2.6789>
- Reilly, J., Dinnsen, D., & Farris-Trimble, A. (2020). The psycholinguistics of curse words: Cognitive and social goals in spontaneous speech. *Language and Cognition*, 12(3), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1017/langcog.2020.15>
- Sebayang, S. N., & Ristia, B. A. (2025). Semantic study of taboo words in Batak culture: Metaphorical extension and social norms. *Young Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10456789>
- Sherman, R. R., & Webb, R. B. (1987). *Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods*. Falmer Press.
- Wardhaugh, R. (1992). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (5th ed.). Blackwell Publishing.
- Wene, I. W., & Ena, O. T. (2020). Cursing, sexual harassment, profanity, obscenity and epithet in *Dallas Buyers Club* movie. *JOALL (Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literature)*, 5(1), 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.33369/joall.v5i1.8920>
- Wibowo, R. M. (2020). Leksikon makian dalam pertuturan bahasa Indonesia: Kajian sosiolinguistik. *Semiotika: Jurnal Ilmu Sastra dan Linguistik*, 21(2), 70–81. <https://doi.org/10.19184/semiotika.v21i2.16934>
- Zuindra, Z., Pujiono, M., & Arifuddin, A. (2021). Taboo words in Deli Javanese dialect. *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching*, 5(2), 339–348. <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v5i2.4562>