

CHAPTER II

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECT OF THE STUDY

II. 1. Taboo Word

Taboo words are words which people avoid to use in society, either because they believe them harmful or feel them embarrassing or offensive (Crystal, 1995: 172). The possibility of harm maybe genuinely thought to exist, in the case of notions to do with death and the supernatural, or there maybe merely a vague discomfort deriving from a half-believed superstition. Embarrassment tends to be associated with the sexual act and its consequences. Offensiveness relates to the various substances especially those which are emitted by the body, and to different forms of physical, mental, and social abnormality.

Words associated with certain topics may also be called taboo, from time to time, because the society feels sensitive to them. The suprising thing is that two words or expressions can have the same or identical linguistic meaning, but one can be socially acceptable while the other strictly forbidden. Acts or words that are forbidden reflect the particular customs and views of the society. In Indonesia, words relating

to sex, sex organs, and slander / swearing words make up a large part of the set of taboo words.

Hayakawa (1972:65) claims that in every language, there seems to be certain “unmentionables” – words of such strong affective connotations that they cannot be used in polite discourse. According to Trudgill (1974: 30), taboo words are frequently used as swears-words. The use depends on the context in which the conversation happens. Buckley in Goshgarian (1992: 468) claims that the context in which bad words or taboo words are used does much to determine the quality of its offensiveness, and the usefulness of the words. For instance, according to Sudaryanto (1994: 84), “diancuk” [‘diancu’] has a taboo meaning. It means ‘disetubuhi’ or ‘be copulated’. Otherwise, when the speaker says “Diancuk! Gantenge arek iku”, the word ‘diancuk’ doesn’t have taboo meaning, since the speaker admires the handsomeness of a man. Taboo can be used to release one’s emotion since taboo words are created as a medium to release one’s emotion, (Estrick & Sperber, 1991: 28).

The existence of taboo words stimulates the creation of ‘euphemism’. A euphemism is a word or phrase which replaces a taboo word, or which is used in the attempt to avoid either fearful or unpleasant subjects. A tiny sample of English euphemism are: fall a sleep for die, spend a penny for urinate, adult video for pornography, and in the family way for the word pregnant, (Crystal, 1995: 172).

II. 1.1. Swear-words

Hudson (1980: 53) says that swear-words are part of the taboo words. According to Trudgil (1974:30), taboo words are frequently used as swear-words. They depend on the context in which the conversation happens.

The functions of swear-words are complex. Most obviously, they are an outlet for frustration or pent-up emotion and a means of releasing nervous energy after a sudden shock. In this case, swear-words are influenced by affective or emotive words. It means that those words appear because of affective touchness which arouse so strong, for instance, when someone is regretful, surprised, annoyed, etc., (Sudaryanto, 1994: 83-85). When a person is in such condition, he will utter those swea-words unconsciously. By uttering those swear-words, he will feel satisfied, since his emotion is released through those swear-words (Estrick & Sperber, 1991: 28). Besides, swearing has also been credited with various social functions as a marker of group identity and solidarity, and as a way of expressing agression without resort to violence. In these social contexts swearing can become a dominant linguistic trait, with sentences often containing many taboo words.

When swear-words are used, the result is a spesific social phenomenon which affects both the speaker and the hearer in a

specifically describable way. This is what Edmund Leach in Damayanti (1991:45) called the language of obscenity which falls into three categories :

1. Dirty Words
2. Blasphemy and Profanity
3. Animal Abuse

II. 1.1.1. Dirty words

Dirty words usually refer to sex and excretion. If the words are used, usually, the rules governing their use can lead to public shame or social repercussions. Psychologists have adequate and persuasive explanations of why the central focus or the crudest obscenity should ordinary lie in sex and excretion (Leach in Damayanti, 1991:45). This could be a reflection of the emphasis traditionally placed in sexual morality in a culture. The word 'diancuk' (be copulated) is one example of dirty words.

II.1.1.2. Blasphemy and Profanity

The sacredness of supernatural beings is likely to imply a concept of sacrilege which in turn explains the emotions aroused by profanity and blasphemy (Leach in Damayanti, 1991: 46). Blasphemy shows contempt or lack of reverence specifically towards God or gods, such as

'Gosh', 'Golly' (from the word "God"), 'Gee', 'Jingo', 'Jezz' (they come from the word 'Jesus'). Profanity has a wider range, including irreverent reference to holy things or people (such as, in Christianity, the cross or the saints), (Crystal, 1995:173).

II.1.1.3. Animal Abuse

Edmund Leach in Damayanti (1991:46) stated that when an animal name is used in the way as an imprecation, it indicates that the name itself is credited with potency and signifies clearly that the animal category is in some way taboo or sacred. So it seems less easily accounted for, that is why 'munyuk' (monkey), 'asu' (anjing or dog), carry the connotation that they do.

II.2. Description of the English Department Students of Airlangga University

The English Department students of Airlangga University graduated from the level of SMU. Most of them come from various regions in East Java, and the rest come from outside East Java.

The latest data show that their number now is 230 students, divided into 57 male students and 173 female students (Sub Bagian Akademik dan Kemahasiswaan, FISIP, UNAIR). The oldest generation at present is 1991's generation (consisting of 2 male and 2 female students),

then 1992's generation with 1 male and 4 female students, 1993's generation (3 male and 6 female students), 1994's with 14 male and 22 female students, 1995's generation with 7 male and 31 female students, then 1996's generation with 6 male and 43 female students, and 1997' generation with 10 male and 31 female students. The youngest generation is 1998's generation with 14 male 34 female students.

II.3. The cultural and linguistic background of the male students of the English Department Of Airlangga University

Most of the English Department's male students are Javanese. The rest of them are Chinese, Madurese, and mix-blooded between Javanese and other ethnic groups.

The conversation among them are done when the class breaks. It is a time when they can enjoy relax situation and express their emotions to tell joke, to tell their private problems and to discuss everyting they want; in which taboo words may exist.

People who use taboo words usually come from low class. High varieties of languages have greater prestige and low varieties of languages are often disparaged (Tannen, 1993: 34). So, to use taboo words is to show their economic and social status. In fact, most of the male students of the English Department of Airlangga University come from middle and upper class families. It does not mean that those who use taboo words in

their conversation are from lower class families. The use of taboo words is merely used because of their close relationship rather than their economic and social status.