



The Taboo on German Language

Siti Patimah

Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan - Indonesia

CORRESPONDENCE: ✉ patimah174@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The terms taboo and prohibition are two different things, even though both are prohibitions. Taboo causes the violator to be hit by a plague, while abstinence-only causes physical or social sanctions, so to avoid violating the pronunciation of taboo words, substitutions or replacement of words or sentences that are considered taboo are carried out, which, if spoken in a context change the connotation of the consequences of the mention. In German culture, there are prohibitions, sayings, and utterances when confronted in every life activity, personal communication, or in conveying thoughts to others. So when faced with communication or language, rules are used, such as communicating with older, younger relatives, of the same age or in daily communication. And this research also aims to map out what is considered taboo in Germany. The method used in this research is qualitative-descriptive, namely by using interview techniques as primary data sources and written data as secondary data as supporting data to analyze problem phenomena. Based on the results of this study, there are five types of taboos in German culture. First, taboos are related to the body (everything related to the body is considered taboo). Second, taboo related to religion. Third, politics-related taboos (singing patriotic songs, putting up flags, and mentioning NAZI). Fourth, it is taboo to say two to older people (the word two is changed to Sie). Fifth, activity taboos (eating, burping, looking at partner's cell phone, littering, crossing carelessly, walking on bicycle paths, and finally, not smoking in the house). If done, all these taboo things for Germans will get sanctions, penalties, or fines.

KEYWORDS

Taboo;
German Language;
Culture.

INTRODUCTION

The terms taboo and prohibition are different, even though both are prohibitions. Taboo causes the violator to be hit by a plague. In contrast, abstinence-only causes physical or social sanctions, so to avoid violating the pronunciation of taboo words, substitutions or replacement of words or sentences that are considered taboo are carried out, which, if spoken in a context, change the connotation of the consequences of the mention (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

In German culture, there are prohibitions, sayings, and utterances when confronted in every life activity, personal communication, or in conveying thoughts to others. So that when they are faced with communication or language, rules are used, such as communicating with older and younger relatives the same age or in daily communication (Hasrul et al., 2022).

The Germans certainly have a way of thinking, a way of looking at things, and a way of responding to things that are different. This is because humans cannot think outside of the language they use. Therefore, language is very influential on a country's culture and the human mindset.

Germany is a country located in the center of Europe. Germany has 16 states: Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Lower Saxony, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rhineland-Pfalz, Saarland, Republic of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, and Thuringia. Each state certainly has a different culture. Therefore Germany has a lot of cultural diversity. This diversity is reflected in the regional spread of cultural institutions and activities in Germany.

Taboo is a prohibition against something, whether it is according to custom, religion, or local customs (Lubis, 2017). "A prohibition, which, if violated, leads to an automatic penalty inflicted by magic and religion", when a taboo or prohibition violated will cause a calamity, misfortune, or punishment for those who deliberately violate it. Taboo is not only applied to language but also in the form of behavior, attitudes, and words. So the word taboo to soften the meaning or make it more positive is conveyed and replaced with other words or sentences that are more polite (Lubis & Syahril, 2015).

In Germany, there are several cultural perspectives or taboo matters, be it speech, daily life, politics, or the privacy of the German people (Miller & Heiland, 2021). With this explanation, the author wants to dig deeper into what is taboo in German culture. And this research also aims to map out what is considered taboo in Germany.

METHOD

This research uses the qualitative descriptive method. Research with a qualitative descriptive format aims to summarize various conditions, situations, or phenomena of social reality that exist in society or research objects (Lubis et al., 2022). In spoken and written data, spoken data is primary data, and supported by spoken data, secondary data in addition to finding taboos in German culture. Oral data from interviews with 2 Germans, Milena (29 years) and Birthdam (40 years). Secondary data in this study is used as comparative data to analyze phenomena. To obtain written data using library techniques by taking data from written sources to obtain data and lingual contexts for analysis (Shaumiwaty et al., 2020). Writing data was obtained using writing techniques from written sources such as books, articles, and other written sources to know taboo things in German culture.

To obtain Primary Data in analyzing it is obtained by using interview techniques, namely by interviewing sources who are Germans. In the interview process, the researcher first asks non-structural questions and then records and transcribes the results by observing and taking notes. The interview technique that was carried out first was a list of words, phrases, or sentences that were taboo in German culture. Then the interviews and literature study results will be described according to the distribution of taboo words according to Wardhaugh's theory (2002) and described based on their classification and explained for later analysis to draw conclusions in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study of language in anthrop linguistics is associated with the role of language in the intricacies of human life. Because culture is the most dominant or core aspect of human life, all hierarchies of language studies in anthrop linguistics are more often analyzed in terms of culture. This study of



language is called understanding language in a cultural context. Cultural studies in anthrop linguistics means understanding the intricacies of culture from language studies or understanding culture through language from a linguistic point of view. Other aspects of human life apart from cultures, such as politics, religion, history, and marketing, can also be studied through language, which is also interesting in anthrop linguistic studies. On that basis, anthrop linguistics does study not only language but also culture and other aspects of human life. However, when studying culture and aspects of human life, anthrop linguistics studies it from language or lingual texts. Anthrop linguistic studies are language and can "explore" culture and other aspects of human life (Sibarani, 2015).

"Taboo is the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame. It is an extremely strong politeness constraint. Consequently, so far as language is concerned, certain things are not to be said or certain objects can be referred to only in certain circumstances, for example, by certain people, or through deliberate circumlocutions, i.e., euphemistically" (Allan & Buridge, 1991). That taboo is a prohibition or avoidance by community groups of behavior that is believed to be harmful to society and individuals because it will bring anxiety, embarrassment, or something embarrassing. This is an emphasis on the courtesy of compensation that applies in society. Thus, some words or utterances cannot be said or uttered in a community group. Of course, these objects can be replaced or exchanged only for something that has been determined or agreed upon as appropriate utterances.

Taboo is a vast subject to know, as in; taboos on gender, death, dirt, bodily functions, religion, and politics. Kridalaksana (2010) divides taboo words into two, namely positive taboo (words or expressions that are prohibited because of harmful powers and negative taboos (words or expressions that are prohibited because of forces that contaminate or damage one's life force).

The terms taboo and prohibition are different, even though both are prohibitions. This difference can be seen in that taboo causes the violator to be hit by plagues while abstinence-only causes physical sanctions or social sanctions, so to avoid violating the pronunciation of taboo words, rewriting or replacing words or sentences that are considered taboo are carried out when spoken in a context, change the connotation of the consequences of the mention.

The following words and sentences are taboo in German culture and are classified against Wardhaugh (2002):

a. Taboo related to the Body

Prohibitions or words that are forbidden to be spoken or spoken by one person to another are related to the Body Parts (functions of the body parts). In German culture, it is taboo to talk about the body, in the form of feet, bodies, and everything that belongs to the German body.

Er hat sehr lange beine "his feet are so small"
Sehr dünner Körper "very thin body"

The above shows that the sentence is taboo in German culture. The utterance is insulting or ridiculing other people's body parts intentionally by the speaker to someone.



b. Taboo related to religion

Prohibition or words are forbidden to be spoken or spoken by one person to another related to religion. In German culture, asking about religion is taboo, because Germany has many people who do not adhere to a religion or are atheists.

c. Taboo related to politics

Prohibition or words forbidden to be spoken or spoken by one person to another are related to politics. It was taboo for Germans to have patriotism and their NAZI past. They are not proud of their past, so they do not sing patriotic songs and are not proud to show their flag. They put up the flag only on official buildings. But don't put up in a private house except for the world cup.

d. Taboo said du to the elder

Prohibitions or words forbidden to be spoken or spoken by one person to another are related to an older age.

Was machst du hier?
"what are you doing here?"

The above sentence is taboo to ask an older person. The word du should be replaced with Sie, which means you. It would be more polite to use it if you ask the elders.

Was machen Sie hier?
"what are you doing here?"

e. Activity taboo

Taboo is related to one's life activities or habits.

1. Eat burp

It is taboo for Germans to burp, especially in public places. They avoid it. If you eat burp, it will be the attention of others, so you feel embarrassed.

2. Look at the partner's cellphone

When looking at your partner's cellphone or someone else's, privacy for Germans is taboo.

3. Throwing garbage carelessly

Germany is also known as a clean country, and it will be challenging to find garbage scattered around Germany. The garbage disposal system in Germany is in order. Every house has at least four trash cans for plastic, paper, bio, and the rest of the trash that doesn't go into the three.

4. Crossing carelessly

Germans are prohibited from crossing carelessly on the road despite having no vehicles.

5. You are not allowed to walk on the bicycle path

Pedestrians have provided roads for pedestrians. Germans comply with the regulations, and if violated, they will receive sanctions or fines.

6. No smoking in the house

This should not be done because it endangers people in the house and its surroundings.



CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, there are five types of taboos in German culture. First, taboos are related to the body (everything related to the body is considered taboo). Second, taboo related to religion. Third, politics-related taboos (singing patriotic songs, putting up flags, and mentioning NAZI). Fourth, it is taboo to say two to older people (the word two is changed to Sie). Fifth, activity taboos (eating, burping, looking at partner's cell phone, littering, crossing carelessly, walking on bicycle paths, and finally, not smoking in the house). If done, all these taboo things for Germans will get sanctions, penalties, or fines.

REFERENCES

- Allan, K., & Burridge, K. (1991). *Euphemism and dysphemism: Language used as shield and weapon*. Oxford University Press.
- Hasrul, S., Lubis, T., & Abus, A. F. (2022). Translation of Political Advertisements from Alas Language into Indonesian. *Lexeme: Journal of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 43–51.
- Kridalaksana, H. (2010). *Pembentukan Kata dalam Bahasa Indonesia*. PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Lubis, T. (2017). Studying Characteristic and Identity Through Oral Literature in Malaynese. *SEMINAR INTERNASIONAL SASTRA LISAN*, 245–252.
- Lubis, T., Sibarani, R., Lubis, S., & Azhari, I. (2022). Cultural Performance of Oral Tradition Nandong Simeulue as Human Resource for Ecotourism: A Linguistic Anthropology Study. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Natural Resources and Sustainable Development*, 428–432. <https://doi.org/10.5220/0009904100002480>
- Lubis, T., & Syahril. (2015). Students' Reading Ability toward TOEIC Score. *Seminar Nasional Industrialisasi Madura*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/P8Q6V>
- Miller, A., & Heiland, S. (2021). Protect Nature—How Characteristics of Nature Conservation Posts Impact User Engagement on Facebook and Twitter. *Sustainability*, 13(22), 12768. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132212768>
- Rahmawati, Sibarani, R., & Lubis, T. (2022). The Performance of Ruwatan in Javanese Community: An Anthropological Approach. *Tradition and Modernity of Humanity*, 2(1), 1–7.
- Shaumiwaty, Lubis, M. A., Lubis, T., Dardanila, Purba, A., Nasution, T., Ramlan, & Hasrul, S. (2020). Teacher performance toward students' mathematical literacy in teaching linear program mathematical models. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1663(1), 012066. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1663/1/012066>
- Sibarani, R. (2015). Pendekatan Antropolinguistik Terhadap Kajian Tradisi Lisan. *Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa RETORIKA*, 1(1), 274–290.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2002). *An Introduction Sociolinguistics. Fourth Edition*. Basil Blackwell.