



**TABOO WORDS
IN THE FILM "THE KARATE KID"
Work: Stanlay Tong
(A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS)**

**KATA-KATA TABU
DALAM FILM "THE KARATE KID"
Karya: Stanlay Tong
(SUATU ANALISIS SOSIOLINGUISTIK)**

Zainuddin^{1*}

¹Universitas Islam Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan

Email koresponden: zainuddin@uinsyahada.ac.id

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Abstract

This research is entitled "Taboo Words in the film The Karate Kid by Stanlay Tong A Sociolinguistic Analysis". The objectives of this research are identifying, classifying, and analyzing the types of taboo words. This research uses a descriptive method. There are three steps to finish this research, the first step is preparation, the data taboo words in the film The Karate Kid by Stanlay Tong were taken from internet and understanding the movie script, also read some books like journal. The second step the writer watches The Karate Kid movie, printed script of the movie, then the writer reads the script and find out the conversations that contain taboo words. The third step is the data were analyzed using theory of Wardhaugh uses seven types of taboo words (1986). The results of this research show that there are 103 taboo words found in The Karate Kid. According to theory of Wardhaugh, there are seven types of taboo words, those are taboo words related to mother in law, animal, sex, death, excretion, bodily function, and religion. The findings of this research support the theory of Wardhaugh.

Keywordsnya: taboo words, the karate ksociolinguistikids, Wardhaugh,

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berjudul "Kata Tabu dalam film The Karate Kid oleh Stanlay Tong A Sociolinguistik". Tujuan dari penelitian ini mengidentifikasi, mengklasifikasikan, dan menganalisis jenis kata-kata tabu. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif. Ada tiga langkah finis di riset ini, langkah pertama adalah persiapan, data tabu dalam film The Karangte Kid oleh Stanlay Tong diambil dari internet dan memahami aksara film tersebut, juga membaca beberapa buku seperti jurnal. Langkah kedua penulis menonton film The Karate Kid, membuat skrip cetak dari film, lalu penulis membaca skrip dan mendapati percakapan yang berisi kata-



kata tabu. Langkah ketiga adalah data yang dianalisis menggunakan teori Wardhaugh menggunakan tujuh jenis kata tabu (1986). Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 103 kata tabu yang ditemukan dalam *The Karate Kid*. Menurut teori Wardhaugh, ada tujuh jenis kata tabu, itu adalah kata-kata tabu yang berhubungan dengan ibu dalam hukum, hewan, seks, kematian, ekskresi, fungsi tubuh, dan agama. Temuan penelitian ini mendukung teori Wardhaugh.

Kata Kunci : Kata kata tabu, anak anak karat, wardhaugh, sociolinguistik

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans live in a world of language. People across the globe use language to communicate with one another. Language is understood as a means to express and convey ideas, thoughts, and emotions in everyday life. It serves as a tool for interaction, enabling individuals to share concepts and feelings. Language can also be defined as a system of symbols—consisting of sounds—that is productive, dynamic, diverse, and inherently human (Dobrovolsky & O’Grady, 1992:1). It functions as a system of communication, a medium of thought, a social institution, a subject of political controversy, and a catalyst for national development. Most humans speak at least one language, and it is difficult to imagine significant social, intellectual, or artistic achievements occurring without it. Therefore, every human being has an interest in understanding the nature and use of language.

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. According to Gleason (1958:10), linguistics examines language systematically and empirically. There are two major aspects of linguistic analysis: internal and external. The internal aspects include phonetics (the study of sounds), phonology (the study of sound systems and structures), morphology (the study of word structure), syntax (the study of how words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences), and semantics (the study of meaning). The external aspects concern the relationship between linguistics and other disciplines, such as psycholinguistics (psychology and linguistics—the study of mental processes involved in language use), sociolinguistics (sociology and linguistics—the study of language in its social context), and ethnolinguistics (ethnology and linguistics—the study of language in relation to culture) (O’Grady & Dobrovolsky, 1992:4).

Trudgill (1974:32) explains that sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies language as a social and cultural phenomenon. It investigates the relationship between language and society and draws from various fields such as sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and human geography. Sociolinguistics describes how social norms, cultural expectations, and context influence language use, and conversely, how language use affects society.

One of the key topics in sociolinguistics is taboo words. According to Trudgill (1974:29–30), taboo words refer to linguistic expressions that are socially or supernaturally prohibited, considered immoral, or inappropriate to utter. Bloomfield (1933:401) adds that taboo words are not inherently archaic but are context-dependent—avoided in some situations and permissible in others.

Based on this explanation, the present study focuses on taboo words found in the film *The Karate Kid* directed by Stanley Tong. The author chose this film because the main character, a secret agent, frequently uses taboo expressions as part of his investigations—language that is widely recognized in popular culture. Although such expressions are typically avoided in formal situations, the character employs them naturally during the course of his work.



To analyze taboo words in the film *The Karate Kid*, the writer uses a sociolinguistic approach since it explores the relationship between language and society as a social phenomenon. The study identifies several taboo words frequently used by the main characters, such as *fuck*, *damn*, *motherfucker*, *shit*, *ass*, and others.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher employed a descriptive method. The entire storyline of the film *The Karate Kid* directed by Stanley Tong served as the primary data source. The identified data were then analyzed descriptively based on Wardhaugh's theory concerning the types of taboo words.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Taboo Words Related to Mother or In-laws

Motherfucker

The word *motherfucker* ("one who has intercourse with his mother") is considered taboo because it is an extremely offensive insult implying a sexual act with one's mother. When used in public conversation, it is deemed highly inappropriate and vulgar, as it conveys disrespect and obscenity.

Example:

I heard the motherfucker say your name, Reggie. (01:36:01,965)

"I heard this bastard say your name, Reggie."

Son of a bitch

The phrase *son of a bitch* ("child of a prostitute") is taboo in public speech among English speakers because it is considered impolite and offensive. It is usually uttered to express anger or frustration.

Example:

I'll kill that son of a bitch! (01:54:31,031)

"I'll kill that bastard!"

Taboo Words Related to Animals

Dog

The word *dog* literally means "a canine," but when used to describe a person, it implies immoral or shameless behavior. Calling someone a dog is deeply insulting because it dehumanizes the person.

Example:

You know what? You a dog, man. (01:20:54,391)

"You know what? You're a dog, man."

Taboo Words Related to Sex

Fuck

The word *fuck* ("to have sexual intercourse") is taboo among English speakers. It is considered vulgar and immoral, especially when referring to sexual acts outside of marriage. The term is often used in anger or frustration, making it highly offensive in most contexts.

Example:

Exercise your right to shut the fuck up. (00:08:08,864)

"Use your right to shut your mouth."



Bitch

The word *bitch* (“a promiscuous woman”) refers to a woman who behaves immorally or aggressively. It is considered harsh and inappropriate, especially in formal contexts. It is also used to insult or express anger toward someone.

Examples:

Fucking bitches. (00:02:40,536) – “Damn prostitutes.”

You calling me a bitch? (00:49:20,708) – “You calling me a slut?”

Suck

Although *suck* literally means “to draw something into the mouth,” it has become taboo because of its association with sexual acts. It is often used metaphorically to express frustration or dislike.

Example:

They stick a tube down your throat and just suck out all the gunk and bile. (01:40:28,231)

“They insert a tube into your throat and suck out all the filth and bile.”

Taboo Words Related to Cursing

Damn

The word *damn* (“cursed”) is taboo because it expresses strong irritation or anger. It is often used as an expletive in emotional situations.

Examples:

Damn! Go! (01:07:47,272) – “Damn! Go!”

All right, yes, damn. (00:11:48,333) – “All right, yes, damn.”

Hell

The word *hell* (“place of punishment”) is taboo when used casually, as it refers to a religious concept. It often conveys frustration or anger.

Examples:

What in the hell is that supposed to mean? (00:45:55,002) – “What the hell does that mean?”

What the hell is going on in my store? (00:54:54,500) – “What the hell is happening in my store?”

Die

The word *die* (“to cease living”) is taboo because it evokes fear and discomfort. It is also used metaphorically to express hopelessness or anger.

Examples:

Ready to die, right, Marcus? (00:07:06,676) – “Ready to die, Marcus?”

My partner came here tonight prepared to die. (00:07:02,339) – “My partner came here tonight ready to die.”

Taboo Words Related to Excretion

Shit

The word *shit* (“feces”) is taboo because it is considered dirty and vulgar, especially in polite company. It is widely used as a curse word to express annoyance or frustration.

Examples:

I can't see shit. (00:05:35,043) – “I can't see a damn thing.”

I'm out of here, shit. (00:05:48,348) – “I'm out of here, damn it.”



Taboo Words Related to Natural Body Functions

Pussy

The word *pussy* (“female genitalia”) is taboo because it refers to private parts and is considered obscene. It is often used as an insult or vulgar slang.

Example:

They just looking for rat pussy. (01:00:38,635)

“They’re just looking for girls.”

Ass

The word *ass* (“buttocks”) is taboo when used to insult or ridicule someone.

Examples:

My ass is what’s out of proportion. (00:14:45,301) – “My butt is what’s out of proportion.”

Oh, kiss my black ass. (00:42:21,414) – “Kiss my black butt.”

Cock

The word *cock* (“male genitalia”) is one of the most obscene English words and is highly inappropriate in any formal or public context.

Example:

Cock diesel motherfuckers that can’t even fucking turn to wipe their ass. (01:16:08,606)

“Big guys who can’t even wipe their own asses.”

Taboo Words Related to Religion

God

The word *God* is taboo when spoken irreverently, especially among Christians who believe in the commandment not to take the Lord’s name in vain. It is often used to express surprise, fear, or gratitude.

Examples:

The view, the pool. Oh my God. (00:20:19,510) – “The view, the pool. Oh my God.”

Thank God no cops died. (00:40:58,248) – “Thank God no police officers died.”

4. CONCLUSION

a) Conclusion

After identifying, classifying, and analyzing the data, the researcher found a total of 103 taboo words in the film *The Karate Kid* directed by Stanley Tong. First, taboo words related to mothers or in-laws appeared 24 times. Second, taboo words related to animals appeared 7 times. Third, taboo words related to sex appeared 20 times. Fourth, taboo words related to death appeared 6 times. Fifth, taboo words related to excretion appeared 20 times. Sixth, taboo words related to natural body functions appeared 12 times. Seventh, taboo words related to religion appeared 14 times. These findings indicate that taboo words are widely used in the film to express emotions, intensify dialogue, and reflect realistic patterns of everyday speech.

b) Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, taboo words represent a fascinating linguistic phenomenon worthy of further research. Future researchers are encouraged to explore taboo words in films of different genres—such as horror or romance—using alternative linguistic theories. Conducting similar studies from various perspectives will enrich understanding of how taboo words function in different social and cultural contexts within language use.



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