

## TABOO AVOIDANCES IN KARO LANGUAGE

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### Abstract

Civilized society like Karo knows taboo culture and how to avoid it well, so that they can be avoided from social conflict and can live peacefully. However, taboo in language and the way to avoid them are considered increasingly scarce as globalization develops among the current millennial generation. As an effort to provide an understanding about the matter concerned towards future generations, this study describes various ways of avoiding the three types of taboo in Karo: taboo in kinship, i.e. among *bengkila* and *permain*, *turangku* and *turangku*, and *mami* and *kela*; context-specific taboos, i.e. words derived from non-taboo words, and words related to social and physical defects; and general taboos, i.e. swearing and unmentionable words. This research was conducted using descriptive qualitative with ethnographic method. The data were obtained from the key informants who were from indigenous people of Tanah Karo Regency. It is found that taboos in kinship can be avoided by strategy of third-person intermediary, strategy of metaphor through object, and strategy of using the word *nina*. Context-specific taboo and general taboo can be avoided by various forms of euphemism. However, taboo of swearing type does not have form of refinement because of its purpose and function as emotive expression.

**Keywords:** taboo, euphemism, kinship, context-specific

### 1. Introduction

Every cultured tribe certainly has a cultural product which is named taboo. It exists in all cultures, generally related to sexuality, supernatural, excretion, death, and various aspects of social life. It is generally considered sacred, should not be touched or spoken, since it is considered as a prohibition (Danesi, 2004: 128). While, Allan and Burridge (2006: 27-33) state that taboos are more than prohibitions and avoidance in tradition. He further says that taboo normally arises from social restrictions on individual behavior that can lead to inconvenience and danger.

Taboo in Karo language, according to Barus et.al. (2018), is mainly classified into three categories, they are: kinship, context-specific, and general. The kinship taboo is generally known as *rebu*, that is a taboo term referring to communication activity that violates cultural rules when it is carried out directly in a kinship among *bengkila* 'father-in-law' (husband's father) with *permain* 'daughter-in-law' (son's wife), *turangku* 'husband's sister's husband' with *turangku* 'wife's brother's wife', and *mami* 'mother-in-law' (wife's mother) with *keila* 'son-in-law' (daughter's husband). In addition, they are also prohibited to sit face to face and side by side without intermediaries. *Rebu*, according to Sembiring (2013) starts when Karonese get

married. After the wedding there is a ceremony called the *mukul* marriage rite, held in the groom's parents' house. This is when the bride and groom have dinner from the same plate and the menu has been determined by the groom's parents. Further, Barus et.al. explained that the context-specific taboo includes words that have no taboo meaning lexically, but their use in certain contexts make them taboo. This category is further divided into two subcategories: non-taboo words and words related to social and physical defects. The general taboo consists of swearing and unmentionable words. These context-specific taboo and general taboo are known as *kemali* or *sikemali* in Karo language.

The verbal and nonverbal expressions that are considered taboo by the Karo society can be avoided in various ways according to their respective contexts or words, however the swearing which is one of the sub classifications of general taboo has no form of avoidance for its purpose and function as an emotive expression that reflects, or seems to reflect the feelings or behaviours of the speaker.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study is a small piece of interdisciplinary science named Linguistic Anthropology, that is "*the study of speech and language within the context of anthropology*" (Hymes, 1963: 277). Based on these, Duranti (1997: 2-3) explains that Linguistic Anthropology is a study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice. While, Foley (1997: 3) uses the term *anthropological linguistics* and calls this term a sub-field of linguistics which is concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures. This study views language through the prism of the core anthropological concept, culture, and as such, seeks to uncover the meaning behind the use, misuse or non-use of language, its different forms, registers and styles. It is an interpretative discipline peeling away at language to find cultural understandings.

Regarding the taboo avoidance strategy, this study uses the concept of euphemism as explained by Allan dan Burridge (2006: 32). Euphemisms are words or phrases used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression. They avoid possible loss of face by the speaker, and also the hearer or some third party. Wardhaugh (2010: 249) explains that euphemism is to avoid mentioning certain matters directly. He further explains that language is also used to avoid saying certain things as well as to express them. Certain things are not said, not because they cannot be, but because 'people don't talk about those things'; or, if those things are talked about, they are talked about in very roundabout ways. Related its forms, Allan and Burridge (2006: 128) explains that euphemisms are created by circumlocution, phonological modification, extending the meaning of a near-synonym (thus reintroducing rarely used words into the basic vocabulary), borrowing from another language, or even by coining a new word.

## 3. Research Method

The research applied qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. By applying such approach and method, the reasearch achieved better results, for it was considered a very appropriate method in investigating accurate information from local people about various strategies they used in avoiding the taboos. In this case, the researcher used the ethnographic method initiated by Spradley (1979), which was by following the twelve steps of developmental research sequence. It was conducted in Tanah Karo Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia, specifically in Berastagi district, Kabanjahe district, Tigapanah district, Barus Jahe district, and Simpang Empat district. The data were obtained from 9 indigenous

informants who understood the culture and language of Karo very well, so that the researcher had strong confidence to the data obtained.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Avoiding Kinship Taboo

Avoiding taboos in communication among three types of relationships, namely among *bengkila* with *permain*, *turangku* with *turangku*, and *mami* with *keila* can be done using three strategies. In communication, people who are included in these kinds of relationship must maintain a distance between one another (should not be too close) and it is highly recommended not to look at each other's interlocutors. Besides, such conversations can be carried out under compulsion and conveyed only very important things. The three strategies are as follows:

#### a) Strategy of third-person intermediary

Communication among two people who are prohibited from communicating directly can be avoided through the intermediary of others as a media to convey messages and as a messenger to the actual interlocutor. Communication as such can be described as follows:

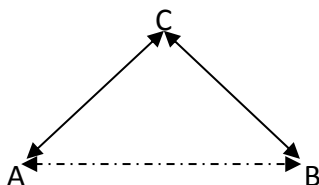


Figure 1: Strategy of third-person intermediary

The figure above is the flow of communication among the member of kinship taboo "A" and "B". As a result of the prohibition in their relationship, both of them need other person "C" as their intermediary. C as a third person is needed and functions as a recipient and messenger of messages from A to B and vice versa. When A wants to convey or ask something to B and vice versa, they must do that through C. Communication like this can be seen in the following example:

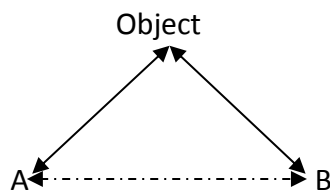
- (1) *Bengkila (A)* : *O Jenni, sungkun sitik permain ena kuja atena.*  
 'O Jenni, please ask *permain* where she is going'.
- Jenni (C)* : *Kuja ateindu e Eida?*  
 'Where are you going, *Eida* (sister in law)?'
- Permain (B)* : *Ku tiga Jenni, kai kin?*  
 'To supermarket Jenni, what happen?'
- Jenni (C)* : *Ku tiga nina, Pa.*  
 'She's going to supermarket, *Pa* (father)!'
- Bengkila (A)* : *Suruh tukurna sitik isapku da.*  
 'Ask her to buy cigarettes for me, okay.'

In the short conversation above, the people who actually need communication are *Bengkila* and *Permain*, but because they are considered the members of taboo, they cannot speak directly, so they must convey their expression through a third person as their intermediary, namely Jenni (a daughter of *Bengkila*). *Bengkila* asked *Permain* through Jenni,

then she passed on his question to *Permain*, and *Permain* answered the question through Jenni, then Jenni passed her answer on to *Bengkila*, and so on. Communication like this also applies to two other members of taboo relationships, namely among *Turangku* and *Turangku*, and *Mami* and *Keila*. By using this strategy, communications among those members of kinship taboo can run well and not violating the norms of customs in Karo society.

### b) Strategy of Metaphor through Object

Communication as in the previous strategy cannot always be done, because there are times when there is no third person who can be used as an intermediary. In emergencies and urgently needed to communicate, the taboo participants can use strategy of metaphor through objects, as it is in the previous strategy, by representing any object existing around them. In this case, it is considered as if the object can receive and convey messages as done by the third person in the previous strategy. When A wants to convey or ask something to B, A conveys to the object concerned about what he/she wants to convey or ask, and as if the object hears it and then forward it to B, the interlocutor, and vice versa. However, this type of communication needs both of the taboo participants to hear each other about what they are saying to the object.



**Figure 2:** Strategy of Metaphor through Object

This taboo avoidance strategy can be illustrated in the short conversation among *Turangku* and *Turangku*, as follows:

(2) *Turangku* : *Sungkun sitik turangku eina, tah tehna kuja bapa Badi ndai,*  
(A) *pintu.*

'Please ask *Turangku*, does she know where Badi's father went, *pintu* ('door').

*Turangku* : *O pintu, kataken man turangku eina, la kuete h kuja bapa Badi*  
(B) *ndai, tapi kuakap pak kedai ia, pintu*

'O *pintu*, tell *Turangku*, I don't know where Badi's father went, but I think he went to the coffee shop, *pintu*.'

*Turangku* : *O.., bujur ningen man turangku eina, pintu.*

(A) 'O.., please say thanks to *Turangku*, *pintu*.'

The conversation above can be done by the members of taboo in a very urgent situation, because *Turangku* (A) does not find other people in or around *turangku's* house (B) as an intermediary, while *Turangku* (A) have to convey something important to *Turangku* (B). In such circumstances, both *Turangku* (A) and *Turangku* (B) treat *pintu* 'door' as a projection media to reflect their conversation to their interlocutor. When conducting this communication, it is also very important to be obeyed that the taboo participants must not look each other as much as they can.

### c) Strategy of using word '*nina*' ('said x')

Besides using the previous strategies, the members of taboo can use the word "*nina*" ('x said'). Karo society call the strategy "*ernina*". In conducting conversation, the two members of taboo involved in a conversation use the word *nina* in every sentence they convey. Uniquely in using the word *nina*, each directs his or her utterances to the interlocutor, so as if it is not he himself says it, but the interlocutor. Besides, the word *nina* is also considered as a means of conveying or delivering messages to the interlocutor. This can be showed as follows:

A(B) ← - *nina* - → (A)B

**Figure 3:** Strategy of Using the Word *nina* ('said x')

The figure shows the role and flow of the usage of the word *nina* to legalize communication among taboo members in Karo language. It is clear that in carrying out the conversation, A uses *nina* as if he is B and vice versa, B uses *nina* as if she is A. For more details, the usage of this strategy can be seen in the following short conversation among *Turangku* (A) and *Turangku* (B):

- (3) *Turangku* : *Kuja idahndu silihndu ndai? Nina Turangku.*  
 (A) 'Where does your brother-in-law go? said *Turangku*?'  
*Turangku* : *E, la kueteh, nina turangku, ku jah kuakap, nina Turangku.*  
 (B) 'I don't know, said *Turangku*, maybe going there, said *Turangku*.'  
*Turangku* : *O... bujur, nina turangku.*  
 (A) 'O...thank you, said *Turangku*.'

In the short conversation above, *Turangku* (A), in delivering his statements and questions, always uses the word *nina turangku* ('said *turangku*'), as if he is not the person speaking, but *turangku* (B). It is the same with *turangku* (B), when giving statements and questions, *Turangku* (B) also uses *nina turangku* ('said *turangku*'), as if she is not the one speaking but *turangku* (A). This strategy is applied as an effort to avoid direct conversation in kinship taboo in Karo language.

## 4.2 Avoiding Context-Specific Taboo

Taboo of this kind is different from those in the previous part, that the context-specific taboo is in the form of words or phrases that basically have ordinary meaning, but they can mean taboo in certain contexts. Some words or phrases that belong to this group can be avoided and some cannot be. Words or phrases that cannot be avoided are all non-taboo words used in curses or swearing. The use of non-taboo words in the form of names of organs of body (such as *babah* 'mouth', *mata* 'eyes', *takal* 'head'), and names of animals (such as *babi* 'pig', *biang* 'dog', *kerbou* 'buffalo', *bengkala* 'ape') is in profanity, whether it is swearing, insulting, cursing, blaspheming, etc., and this cannot be avoided because of the context and purpose. It is understandable that someone who swears is a result of his high temperamental soul, so he curses, blasphemes, and swears, and so on with the aim to give bad effect to the interlocutor. That is the reason why non-taboo words of this group cannot be avoided, in other words, swearing can be avoided only by not mentioning such words. It can also be said that expressions which avoid taboo are not part of swearing.

Unlike some words that derive from non-taboo, the use of names of wild animals (such as *nipe* 'snake', *gajah* 'elephant', *arimo* 'tiger') and supernatural beings (*begu*) in certain places, which are usually not used in swearing, can be avoided by language refinement or euphemism. To avoid the use of taboo language, generally, these four words are replaced by specific appellation *nini* 'grandmother' or *nini si njaga kerangen* 'grandmother the jungle guardian'. The use of the word *nini* is intended as a tribute, because *nini* in Karo language is the parent of father, and is a figure that must be fully respected. The guardian of jungle is used as a tribute because the wild animal is positioned as a guardian entity that has extraordinary powers in the forest area. This title is considered as a tribute, and is believed by the tribute and praise to the beast, and by this the Karo community can avoid the anger and fury of these creatures.

Specifically, the mention of *nipe* 'snake' is usually replaced by the word *waren* 'creeping grass' and *si gedang gendit* 'the long belt'. Both of the euphemisms are the form of refinement of their original name which is considered taboo. *Nipe* creeps like grass that creeps in forest, so that this reptile is called *waren* 'creeping grass'. By using this word, society is considered to understand what it is referring to, and by using it, it will not provoke the animal's anger. While, *si gedang gendit* is used to refer to snake because of its physical shape which is similar to a belt which in Karo is named *gendit*.

The wild animal *arimo* 'tiger', in addition to the name of *nini si njaga kerangen* 'grandmother the jungle guardian', the name of *arimo* is usually refined with *si belang awak*. *Si belang* means 'the striped color' and *awak* means 'body'. Altogether this phrase means 'striped colored animal'. This phrase is used as a form of euphemism of *arimo*, because of its wide body shape and its yellow-black fur. With the phrase of *si belang awak*, the Karo people understand about the entity referred to and is considered to have moved away from the taboo so as to avoid possible dangers.

*Gajah* 'elephant' is one of the wild animals that are feared to mention its name in Karo, especially in jungle and farming areas. To avoid the danger that is believed to be caused by the animal's anger, the Karo people use another name as a form of euphemism that refers to an animal called an elephant. As the form of refinement, Karo society usually called it *datuk* 'ancestor' (a person who is glorified). By using the word *datuk*, the Karo community believes that these wild animals will feel respected so that they will not be angry and damage the citizen's plants.

Likewise with the so-called *begu* 'ghost', the name of this supernatural entity also has a form of euphemism to avoid undesired things. The form of euphemism that is often used as a refinement to the spirits (*begu*) is also *nini*. *Begu* in the beliefs of ancient Karo people is the soul or spirit of dead people. The deceased person deserves to be called the one who has preceded, and in the family tree of the former or the oldest is *nini*, so the form of euphemism for this entity is called *nini*. *Begu* in Karo language is a disturber entity, therefore this creature must be respected or honoured, by using a name that makes him feel respected. With this name '*nini*', those spirits or *begu* will not do undesirable things, such as causing sickness and fear.

As creatures, humans have their strengths and weaknesses. Basically, humans will feel happy when others greet him or express their strengths or good sides, and vice versa, they will feel hurt when others express or greet him with the weaknesses or bad sides. Therefore, greeting someone by showing his weaknesses is considered taboo and has bad ethics towards fellow human beings. That is why, this must be avoided through refinement or euphemism.

In Karo language, mental illnesses such as *mehado* 'crazy' and *tabun* 'epilepsy' have another form which is considered more polite, namely by paraphrasing techniques. *Mehado* and *tabun* can be refined with the phrase *la seh-sehsa kal ukurna, lit sakitna, la bagi kita e kal oratna* 'having mental disorder'. All forms of euphemism lead to the lack of normal systems and ways of thinking.

Physical disease named *gadam* 'leprosy' also has a form of avoidance. Its euphemism form is the phrase *pinakit lau simou-mou* 'desease of *lau simou-mou*'. *Lau Simou-mou* is a place in Kabanjahe where there is a hospital for lepers. The hospital is a place for people who have leprosy, a very scary disease and believed very difficult to be cured in ancient times. As the existence and function of the hospital have been widely known by Karo community as a place to cure such disease, finally this makes the community accustomed to call it by *pinakit lau simou-mou*. These also happen to physical diseases as *pentang* 'blind', and *pasek* 'deaf'. The word *pentang* can be refined by paraphrase *la erpengidah/lanai erpengidah* 'unable to see' or 'blind', whereas *pasek* 'deaf' and can be avoided with paraphrasing of *la erpemegi* 'unable to hear'.

Words related to death, namely *mate* 'die' is also considered taboo. In Karo language, the word *mate* has several forms of euphemisms, all of which are paraphrased. The paraphrase is used according to the circumstances, but in general the use of the word *mate* is said *enggo idilo Dibata* 'has been called by God'. *Enggo idilo Dibata* can be used in every circumstance. *Enggo lawes* 'already left' is specifically used when informing the death person who die due to illness. More specifically, if the deceased is someone who already has grandchildren, old age or commonly called *cawir metua*. Dying in such condition, can be called as *enggo metua* 'already old'. In other words, this is not commonly mentioned when someone informs the death of a young child. Whereas, in the context of traditional ceremony of death, *mate* it is commonly expressed with the phrase *enggo idilo Dibata* 'has been called by God', *enggo lawes ku ingan si rasa lalap* 'has gone to eternal place', *enggo leben ngeiluk nandangi kita* 'has preceeded us', *enggo ngadap man Dibata* 'have faced God' However, all forms of language euphemisms about death can be represented by the phrase *enggo idilo Dibata*. This phrase is commonly used in all conditions. Taboo verbal expressions related to murder, namely the word *bunuh* 'kill', can be avoided by using the word for *buat kesah* 'take a breath'. For example, a taboo expression related to murder, *bunuh* 'kill' can be avoided by *buat kesah* 'take a breath'. For example: *Enggo bunuhna preman ah ndai* 'he killed the gangster' can be avoided by *enggo buatna kesah preman ah ndai* 'he has taken the gangster's breath'.

#### 4.3 Avoiding General Taboo

Some of taboo words that are classified as general taboo can be avoided, but some others cannot, except by leaving them. All the taboo words in swearing, namely skatology (*taim!*, *ngengekmu!* 'Your shit!' and *patatmu/ikurmu!* 'Your ass!'); sex organs (*natum!* 'your dick!', *teli amem* 'your mother's pussy!', and *pepekmu!* 'your cunt!'); sexual activities (*entek/entek-entek* 'getting fuck'); mother (family) (*amem!* 'your mother!' and *bapam!* 'your father!'); ancestors (*ninim!* 'your grandmother!', and *ninimu bulangmu!* 'your grandfather!'); animals (*babi* 'pigs', *biang* 'dogs', *bengkala* 'monkeys/apes', and *kerbo* 'buffalo'); death (*mate/tes* 'dead', *bunuh* 'kill', *geleh* 'cut', *takil* 'chop', *tebak* 'stabbed', *munggil* 'dead', and *ndelis* 'suicide'); disease (*mehado/adon* 'crazy', *pentang* 'blind', and *pinangko* 'thief'); and prostitution (*lonte* 'bitches'), cannot be avoided by refinement or euphemism.

The group does not have better forms and ways to avoid the taboo because of its unique context, method, and purpose. It is understandable that someone who does a

swearing is in a high emotional state due to things or treatments that are not in accordance with his wishes. These profanity words or phrases are spoken in a harsh and abusive manner, and with glances and sharp eyes towards the interlocutors. The words chosen and the way conveyed in such a way are considered to be able to vent their deep emotion and at the same time have an adverse effect on the interlocutor. This is why it has no forms of language refinement or euphemism. In other words, swearing whose words are replaced with finer forms, delivered with a low tone and fainter eyes, make this communication no longer considered swearing.

In contrast to swearings, taboo groups which cannot be mentioned can be avoided by their respective forms of euphemism. This is due to the context of its usage only in the context of ordinary conversation. Sub group of dirty words are divided into sex organs, sexual activity, bodily impurities, and disposal of bodily contaminants. All of these types have finer words as the avoidance of the taboo.

Male sex organ *natu* 'dick' can be refined by the word *manuk* 'chicken', *piduk* 'bird' and *Dibata* 'god'. Karo people use *manuk* and *piduk* to represent male genitals due to their shared characteristics. Physically, the male sex organ *natu* has fur, and in the experience of Karo societies, hairy animals that are widely known by the society are *manuk* and *piduk*. Unlike the case with these two forms of euphemism, *Dibata* 'God' is used to refine the word *natu*, because it is considered to have little in common, namely as a creator. Basically God does not have similarities in His substance, nature, or deeds. However, the Karo community regards the male genital as the "creator" and puts the fetus in the womb of a mother. This makes the Karo people use the word *Dibata* as a subtle form of the word *natu*.

Part of male genitals that are included in the taboo is *naru-naruh* 'testicles'. Although frequency of the usage of the word *naruh-naruh* is less frequent than the other organs. This word is also considered taboo in the Karo language. To avoid using this word of taboo, Karo people use the phrase *baban-baban dilaki* "male's luggage". The phrase is due to its existence which hangs on the male genitalia, as if it were a luggage, so that it is likened to a male's luggage.

The female sex organ *teli/pepek* 'vagina' is a very prohibited thing to say in Karo. To avoid this taboo, the Karo language uses *juma* 'fields', and *sabah* 'rice fields', and sometimes using *lesung* '=thing used to pound rice into flour'. *Juma* and *sabah* are areas where farmers place seeds to grow, while *lesung* is something used to put rice to pound using pestle. From its function, the three words have the same function which is the same as a place to put things. This has been considered the same function as the sex organ *teli/pepek* which is a place where men put their seeds into their women's wombs which will later develop into fetuses. The similarity of functions becomes a reason why Karo people use *juma*, *sabah*, and *lesung* as euphemisms for female sex organs.

In a woman's body, there are also other organs that are considered taboo to be mentioned. The organ is *nonon/nenen* 'breast'. To avoid mentioning the name of this organ, the Karo people use the word *poula* 'roomie' as its euphemism. In general, *poula* tastes sweet and is beneficial for health. Likewise, milk produced by or coming through the female organs *nonon/nenen*, becomes the main drink and source of energy for a baby. The similarity of these characteristics is used as a reason for the Karo people to refine the word *nonon/nenen* with *poula*.

Besides the organs above, mentioning *gerem* 'pubic hair' for male or female is also considered taboo in Karo. To avoid this, Karo people call it *buk teruh* 'bottom hair'. In addition to *gerem* 'pubic hair', there are several types of hair grow in human body, such as hair grows



on head which is called *buk* 'hair', above the eyes is called *alis* 'eyebrows', on the eyelids is called *mbulu mata* 'eyelashes', above the mouth is called *gumis* 'mustache', under the chin is called *jenggot* 'beard', on the armpit is called *mbulu kikir* 'armpit hair', and on the legs is called *mbulu nahe* 'leg feather', and none of these types are considered taboo.

To mention the activities carried out with the sex organs presented above are also considered taboo in Karo language such as *entek-entek/ngentek* 'fuck', *merus-merus* 'masturbation', and *tegir* 'erection'. Therefore, these words must also be refined to avoid taboo. The word *entek-entek/ngentek* 'fuck' can be refined by using the phrase *sipanganen* 'eating each other'. *Sipanganen* is intended that man and woman make a love as if they eat each other. Furthermore, *merus-merus* 'masturbation' is replaced by the word *ngelukluki* 'curling up', because this act is a sexual stimulus for a man by grasping his dick and sliding his hands in front and back to provide excitement to him and release semen. Furthermore, *tegir* 'erection' can be refined by the word *nggeloh* 'life'. *Ngggeloh* is not considered taboo because it has a general meaning, but if it is associated with sexual activity, the Karo community can understand its connotative meaning, that the word refers to the activity of male genitals.

Words related to human bodily impurities such as *cih* 'urine', *teges* 'semen', *kesut* 'fart', and *tai/ngengek/berak* 'shit/feces' also have euphemism forms to avoid mentioning these prohibited words in Karo. In its finer form, *cih* is called *lau* 'water'. The word *lau* is used to obscure the meaning of urine, so that it can be used in a public conversation. The euphemism form of word *teges* 'semen' is *lau baban dilaki* 'man's default water'. This form of paraphrase is considered to be able to shift its taboo meaning to be more subtle. Then, wind released through the rectum is called *kesut* 'fart', and its form of euphemism is *gas* 'gas'. The diversion of a special form to the general form makes this word spared from taboo, because *gas* does not only come from stomach which is released through the rectum but more than that, like natural gas, gas that is released through mouth called belching, and so on. Then, to avoid the taboo of the word *tai/ngengek/berak* 'shit', Karo people use its euphemism *kotoren* 'filth'. This word is used to dissimulate its taboo meaning.

An activity to defecate, which in Karo language is called *ngengek/ciret/berak* 'defecating', is refined with the word *ku turai* 'to back veranda' or *kiduru* 'to the vert'. In the past, many Karo people lived in *rumah siwaluh jabu* (=karo traditional house usually inhabited by 8-10 families). The *siwaluh jabu* had a veranda called *turai* which was usually used as a place where people defecate, and the defecation that fell down would be eaten by pigs. This is the reason why the Karo people used the words *ku turai* towards such activity. Whereas *kiduru* 'going to vert' is used because in general the Karo people in the past used to defecate at the edges of the village or bushes. However, the two phrases *ku turai* and *kiduru* are almost no longer be used in Karo language, because the existence of the *rumah siwaluh jabu* is almost extinct. These phrases are gradually replaced by *ku belakang* 'backward/to the back' or *ke kamar mandi* 'to the bathroom'.

The urinating activity *cih* 'urinate' can also be refined as *kiduru*, and sometimes they use *litap* 'wet'. The word *litap* is used because this activity releases urine which is strongly associated with the wet nature. In addition, urinating is also commonly referred to by the phrase *ku kamar mandi* or *ku belakang* as it is explained in previous paragraph. While, taboo words for the activity of removing air through the rectum, namely *erkesut* 'farting' can be avoided by saying *buang gas* 'flue gas', because fart is in the form of gas or air coming from the stomach.

In Karo, mentioning parents' names and senior or older relatives' names are considered taboo, and they have no forms of euphemism, that is why Karo culture avoid the

societies to mention their names. While, the taboo of mentioning specific pronouns *engko* 'you' with all words related to the pronoun such as *entei* 'you go there', *ariko* 'you come here' and possessive adjective *-ko*, *-mu*, *-m* 'your' can be avoided with their polite forms. When someone wants to greet his parents or ancestors or relatives that are older than him/her by using such possessives, she/he is considered breaking the taboo, that is why Karo language has their forms of euphemism or their forms of subtle possessives. The pronoun *engko* 'you' as subject and object should be changed with *kam* (=the subtle form of you), *entei* 'you go there' be changed with *tau* 'you go there +polite', *ariko* 'you come here' be changed with *mari*, and *-ko/-mu/-m* 'possessive forms of you' be changed with *-ndu*.

However, for the word *entei* 'you go there', there is a more polite way than the word *tau*, that is by using the phrase *ku jah kam*. The words *tau* and *ku jah kam* are considered to have slightly different levels of politeness. The word *tau* is considered a little lower polite because it still contains an element of ordering the interlocutor to leave, while the phrase *ku jah kam* shows that the interlocutor's departure is on the basis of his/her sincerity to leave, and not on the basis of orders.

## 5. Conclusion

The taboo rules in Karo language have several meanings and functions, all of which lead to noble values which are used as a tool to limit the community in communication so that harmony and good relations can be maintained well. From the research, it can be concluded that the ethnographic methods play comprehensive processes and results in investigating various taboo matters and forms of avoidance that are prevalent and acceptable in accordance with the rules of language and culture. This study finds three types of relationships that are considered taboo to communicate in kinship relationships; various words and phrases classified as context-specific taboo and general taboo in Karo. Then, this study specifically finds various ways and forms of euphemism to avoid these taboos. Kinship taboo can be avoided by strategy of third-person intermediary, strategy of metaphor through object, and strategy of using word 'nina' ('said x'). There are various forms of euphemism used as taboo avoidance of context-specific taboo and general taboo. However, taboo in the form of swearing does not have its form of euphemism because of the purpose and function of this type of taboo as an emotive expression.

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