THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF TABOO WORDS IN AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH: A STUDY ON AUSTRALIAN TOURISTS IN BALI

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of using swear words in Australian English is worth studying because it not only serves as an expression of emotion but also reflects the social and cultural values of its speakers. In cross-cultural interactions, such as Australian tourists visiting Bali, the use of such words has the potential to cause misunderstandings. This study aims to identify and explain the forms, functions, and references of swear words in Australian English from a sociolinguistic and cultural perspective. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a sociolinguistic approach. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with Australian tourists, while secondary data were obtained through document analysis. Three informants were selected based on specific criteria, with the researcher serving as the main instrument, supported by field notes, questionnaires, and interview guidelines. The findings revealed 32 Australian English swear words categorized by their forms, consisting of words (11), phrases (13), and clauses (8). In terms of function, these swear words were used to draw attention, discredit, provoke, establish interpersonal identification, express emotions, provide emphasis, and show aggression. Based on their references, the swear words were related to sexuality (16), excrement (7), religion (4), and personal background (3). The study concludes that the use of swear words in Australian English is not only a means of emotional communication but also an integral part of the speakers' cultural identity.

Keywords: *Sociolinguistics, Australian Culture, Taboo Words, Australian English, Linguistic Anthropology*

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is the primary means for humans to convey feelings, ideas, and information in everyday life (Ibna Seraj & Habil, 2019). As a system of sound symbols that develops naturally within society, language functions as a tool of communication capable of expressing a wide range of knowledge and ideas (Arutyunova, 1979; Tektigul et al., 2023). Furthermore, language is closely tied to culture, encompassing knowledge, beliefs, customs, and social activities (Løtveit & Bugge, 2020; Wren, 2012). For this reason, language cannot be separated from the social and cultural values of its speakers.

One particular variation of language that attracts scholarly interest is the use of swear words. Swearing is not only a way of releasing emotions but also reflects cultural values and prevailing social norms (Sulpizio et al., 2019). Previous studies have shown that swearing is connected to neurocognitive factors and that there are differences in how taboo words are processed in a first versus a second language (Christianson et al., 2017). Hughes (2006) classifies

swear words into several categories, including those related to sexuality, the human body, and sexual activity. In a local context, studies by Yani et al. (2017) and Wisudayanti (2020) found that swearing in the Balinese language includes references to religion, excrement, sex, animals, mental illness, and personal background. These findings indicate that while swearing is a universal phenomenon, its forms and references are shaped by cultural context.

From a theoretical perspective, Allan and Burridge (2012) discuss the concepts of euphemism and dysphemism in relation to linguistic taboos. Euphemisms are used as alternatives to undesirable expressions, with the aim of avoiding potential loss of face for either the speaker or the hearer. Conversely, dysphemisms are offensive expressions used to replace neutral or euphemistic ones, often intended to insult or to strengthen a negative impression. Wardhaugh (1986) further argues that taboo is closely linked to cultural meanings embedded in language. According to him, taboo words function to prohibit the mention of certain things that, if spoken, may be considered morally or socially harmful.

In line with this, Trudgill (1974) notes that taboo words are generally associated with behaviors considered prohibited either morally or supernaturally. Violating linguistic taboos often results in social sanctions such as shame or punishment from the community.

In Bali, swear words are commonly used among children and adolescents, although often in socially inappropriate contexts. Examples of Balinese swear words include *pirata* (religion), *naskleng* (sex), *tai* (excrement), *cicing* (dog), *bojog* (monkey), *lengeh* (idiot), and *buduh* (crazy) (Wisudayanti, 2020). Meanwhile, Indonesian also has its own common swear words such as *bangsat* or *bajingan*. However, in cross-cultural interactions, swearing may lead to misunderstandings, particularly since Bali is an international tourist destination. Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2022 showed that Australian tourists dominated post-pandemic arrivals in Bali, numbering 605,955 people or 28.11% of total visitors (Tirtawati et al., 2023). This situation is prone to communicative conflict, as Australian English swear words may differ in meaning or offensiveness compared to Balinese ones.

Irwin (2019) stresses that sharing a language and culture does not necessarily guarantee communication free of misunderstanding. Therefore, this study aims to identify the forms, meanings, and functions of swear words in Australian English. By employing a qualitative approach through interviews with selected informants, the research seeks to reduce potential cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings between Balinese people and Australian tourists.

This study applies a qualitative method as its primary approach. The research scope is deliberately limited to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, focus, and depth. This is important to clarify the research problem and direct the study toward the use of swear words in Australian English. To collect the data, the researcher conducted interviews with informants selected based on specific

criteria. Based on the background outlined above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the swear words used in Australian English?
2. What forms do Australian English swear words take?
3. What are the functions of swear words in Australian English?
4. What are the references of swear words in Australian English?

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to identify the forms, functions, and references of swear words in Australian English. The research was conducted in Lovina, Buleleng, Bali, which was selected as the location because it is a tourist destination frequently visited by Australians. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with primary and secondary informants, as well as document analysis to strengthen the findings. The interviews were used to explore personal experiences and perspectives regarding the use of swear words, while document analysis helped identify swear word vocabulary, which was later confirmed with the informants. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (1994), which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in a continuous process from the beginning to the end of the research.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected through in-depth interviews with informants, 32 (thirty-two) Australian English swear words were identified as commonly used by Australians. These swear words were classified according to their forms, functions, and references.

Table 1
Australian English swear words are used by Australian.

No	Australian English swear words	Meaning
1.	Fuck	Expresses anger, surprise, or emphasis.
2.	Cunt	Offensive term for a person; sometimes casual in Australian swear word .
3.	Slut	Derogatory term for someone perceived as promiscuous.
4.	Slag	Australian swear word similar to 'slut.'
5.	Knob	Australian swear word for 'idiot' or refers to male genitalia.
6.	Wanker	Australian swear word for an annoying or foolish person.
7.	Derro	Australian swear word for a down-and-out or homeless person.
8.	Fanny	Referring to female genitalia
9.	Drongo	Australian swear word for an 'idiot' or 'fool.'
10.	Bogan	Australian swear word for an uncultured or unsophisticated person.
11.	Rooted	Australian swear word for sex.
12.	Sheep shagger	Refers to person who from rural area.

13.	Fuckwit	A foolish or stupid person.
14.	Fuckin oath	Australian swear word for 'absolutely!' or 'definitely!'
15.	Fuckin hell	Expresses anger, frustration, or disbelief.
16.	Bloody hell	Means 'nothing' or 'very little.'
17.	Bloody oath	Wasting time or behaving foolishly.
18.	Piss off	Australian expression of frustration or surprise.
19.	Shit-faced	Australian swear word for strong agreement.
20.	Get stuffed!	Rude way of telling someone to go away.
21.	Bugger off	Very drunk.
22.	Knob head	Rude way of saying 'go away' or 'no way.'
23.	Fuck all	Less harsh way of telling someone to go away.
24.	Fuckin around	Insult for a stupid or annoying person.
25.	Shit a brick	Expression of extreme surprise or shock.
26.	Shit for brains	Insult for someone perceived as stupid.
27.	Not here to fuck spider	It's a vulgar and emphatic way of saying "I'm not here to mess around."
28.	Get your shit together	To organize yourself or sort out your life.
29.	Up shit creek without the paddle	In a very bad or difficult situation.
30.	Ah thats fucked	Expression of frustration, disappointment, or disbelief.
31.	You're full of shit	Accusing someone of lying or exaggerating.
32.	Don't get your knees in a knot	Don't get upset over something trivial.

Australian English Swear Words in Word Form

This section presents Australian English swear words in the form of words.
a. Monomorphemic

Tabel 2
Australian English Swear Words in Monomorphemic Morphological Structure

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	*Fuck*
2.	*Cunt*
3.	*Slut*
4.	*Slag*
5.	*Knob*
6.	*Wanker*
7.	*Derro*
8.	*Fanny*
9.	*Drongo*
10.	*Bogan*

These words consist of a single morpheme (they cannot be broken down into smaller meaningful units). There are ten (10) Australian English swear words

in monomorphemic form that are commonly used: *Fuck, Cunt, Slut, Slag, Knob, Wanker, Derro, Fanny, Drongo,* and *Bogan.*

b. Polimorfemis

Tabel 3

Australian English Swear Words in Polymorphemic Morphological Structure

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	*Rooted*

These words consist of more than one morpheme (a combination of free and bound morphemes). There is one (1) Australian English swear word in polymorphemic form that was identified, namely: *Rooted.*

Australian English Swear Words in Phrase Form

This section presents Australian English swear words in the form of phrases.

a. Verb Phrases

Tabel 4

Australian English Swear Words in the Form of Verb Phrases

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Piss off
2.	Bugger off
3.	Get stuffed!
4.	Fuckin around

The interview results revealed four (4) swear words in the form of verb phrases, namely: *Piss off, Fuckin around, Bugger off, Get stuffed,* and *Get your shit together.*

b. Frasa Nomina

Tabel 5

Australian English Swear Words in the Form of Noun Phrases

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Sheep shagger
2.	Fuckwit
3.	Knob head
4.	Fuck all

Noun phrases are used to refer to people, objects, or concepts. There are four (4) swear words in the form of noun phrases, namely: *Sheep shagger, Fuckwit, Knob head,* and *Fuck all.*

c. Frasa Adjektiva

Tabel 6

Australian English Swear Words in the Form of Adjective Phrases

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Shit-faced

| 2. | Bloody hell |
| 3. | Fuckin hell |

These phrases function to describe or intensify the depiction of a condition, whether physical, emotional, or situational. There are three (3) Australian English swear words in the form of adjective phrases, namely: *Shit-faced, Bloody hell,* and *Fuckin hell*

d. Adverbial Phrases

Tabel 7
Australian English Swear Words in the Form of Adverbial Phrases

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Bloody oath
2.	Fuckin oath

These phrases describe how, to what extent, or in what manner something happens, and are typically used to emphasize a previous statement. There are two (2) Australian English swear words in the form of adverbial phrases, namely: *Bloody oath* and *Fuckin oath*

Australian English Swear Words in Clause Form
a. Independent Clauses

Tabel 8
Australian English Swear Words in the Form of Independent Clauses

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	*Shit a brick*
2.	*Ah, that's fucked*
3.	*You're full of shit*
4.	*Get your shit together*

Independent clauses carry complete meaning and can stand alone grammatically. For example: *"You're full of shit."* There are four (4) Australian English swear words in the form of independent clauses, namely: *Shit a brick, Ah, that's fucked, You're full of shit,* and *Get your shit together.*

b. Dependent Clauses

Tabel 9
Australian English Swear Words in the Form of Dependent Clauses

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	*Shit for brains*
2.	*Not here to fuck spiders*
3.	*Up shit creek without the paddle*
4.	*Don't get your knees in a knot*

Dependent clauses require another clause to form complete meaning. For instance, *"Not here to fuck spiders"* sounds like part of a larger sentence. There are four (4) Australian English swear words in the form of dependent clauses, namely: *Shit for brains, Not here to fuck spiders, Up shit creek without the paddle,* and *Don't get your knees in a knot*

Functions of Australian English Swear Words

Based on their functions, nine (9) different uses of swear words have been identified. Rothwell (1973) mentions five functions: to draw attention, to discredit, provocation, interpersonal identification, and catharsis. Meanwhile, Wang (2013) adds four functions: to express emotion, to provide emphasis, to signal group identity/solidarity, and to show aggression. In this study, only seven (7) categories of functions were found.

a. To Draw

Tabel 10
Australian English Swear Words Used to Draw Attention

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Fuck
2.	Fuckin hell
3.	Bloody hell
4.	Fuckin oath
5.	Bloody oath

Table 10 shows five (5) swear words that serve to draw attention. Some people use swear words to gain the attention of others, as they are perceived as a strong way of capturing listeners' focus. The swear words in this function are: *Fuck, Fuckin hell, Bloody hell, Fuckin oath,* and *Bloody oath.*

b. Discredit

Tabel 11 Australian English Swear Words Used to Discredit

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Cunt
2.	Slut
3.	Slag
4.	Knob
5.	Wanker
6.	Fanny
7.	Fuckwit
8.	Knob head
9.	You're full of shit

Table 11 shows nine (9) swear words used to discredit. Swearing in this context is used to express disappointment toward a person, institution, or government. In this way, speakers express disapproval of something that does not meet their expectations. The swear words in this category are: *Cunt, Slut, Slag, Knob, Wanker, Fanny, Fuckwit, Knob head,* and *You're full of shit*

c. To Provoke

Tabel 12
Australian English Swear Words Used to Provoke

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Piss off
2.	Bugger off
3.	Get stuffed!
4.	Don't get your knees in a knot

Swear Table 12 shows four (4) swear words that serve to provoke. Swearing in this function is used to incite others to react angrily or retaliate. The swear words in this category are: Piss off, Bugger off, Get stuffed, and Don't get your knees in a knot.*.*

d. Interpersonal Identification

Tabel 13
Australian English Swear Words Used for Interpersonal Identification

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Derro
2.	Bogan
3.	Sheep shagger

Makian Table 13 shows three (3) swear words that serve as markers of interpersonal identity. Swearing is used to signify the identity of a particular group or community. The swear words in this category are: *Derro, Bogan,* and *Sheep shagger*

e. Express Emotion

Tabel 14
Australian English Swear Words Used to Express Emotion

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Fuck
2.	Shit-faced
3.	Shit a brick
4.	Knob head
5.	Ah, that's fucked

6.	Fuckin hell
7.	Bloody hell
8.	Shit for brains
9.	Up shit creek without the paddle

Table 14 shows eight (8) swear words that serve to express emotions, particularly negative ones such as anger or frustration. The swear words in this category are: *Fuck, Shit-faced, Shit a brick, Knob head, Up shit creek without the paddle, Ah, that's fucked, Fuckin hell,* and *Bloody hell, Shit for brains.*

f. Emphasize

Tabel 15
Australian English Swear Words Used to Emphasize

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Fuckin around
2.	Not here to fuck spider
3..	Shit for brains

Tabel 15 shows three (3) swear words that serve to provide emphasis. Swearing in this function is used to strengthen the speaker's feelings or the message being conveyed. The swear words in this category are: *Fuckin around, Not here to fuck spiders,* and *Shit for brains.*

g. Aggression

Tabel 16
Australian English Swear Words Used to Show Aggression

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Piss off
2.	Bugger off
3.	Get stuffed!
4.	You're full of shit

Table 16 shows four (4) swear words that function to display aggression directed at a particular target. The swear words in this category are: *Piss off, Bugger off, Get stuffed,* and *You're full of shit.*

Referensi Kata Makian Bahasa Inggris Australia

Based on their references, swear words are generally divided into six categories. However, in this study, four (4) categories of references were identified

a. Sex

Tabel 17
Australian English Swear Words Referring to Sex

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Fuckwit
2.	Ah that's fucked
3.	Cunt
4.	Slut
5.	Not here to fuck spiders
6.	Slag
7.	Knob
8.	Fuckin around
9.	Knob head
10.	Bugger off
11.	Get stuffed!
12.	Wanker
13.	Fanny
14.	Rooted
15.	Fuck all
16.	Fuck

Table 17 shows sixteen (16) swear words related to sex. These swear words are associated with terms for sexual organs, activities, or behaviors. They are often used to express strong emotions, to insult, or to add emphasis. Examples include: *Fuckwit, Ah that's fucked, Cunt, Slut, Not here to fuck spiders, Slag, Knob, Fuckin around, Knob head, Bugger off, Get stuffed!, Wanker, Fanny, Rooted, Fuck all,* and *Fuck.*

b. Excrement

Tabel 18
Australian English Swear Words Referring to Excrement

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Up shit creek without the paddle
2.	Get your shit together
3.	Shit for brains
4.	Shit a brick
5.	Shit-faced
6.	Piss off
7.	You're full of shit

Table 18 shows seven (7) swear words referring to bodily waste. These swear words are typically used to express disgust, frustration, or negative emotions. Examples include: *Up shit creek without the paddle, Get your shit together, Shit for brains, Shit a brick, Shit-faced, Piss off,* and *You're full of shit.*

c. Religion

Tabel 19
Australian English Swear Words Referring to Religion

No	List of Australian English swear words

1.	Bloody oath
2.	Fuckin hell
3.	Bloody hell
4.	Fuckin oath

Table 19 shows four (4) swear words related to religion. These swear words are usually employed to emphasize surprise or annoyance, often invoking religious expressions to intensify emotional reactions. Examples include: *Bloody oath, Fuckin hell, Bloody hell,* and *Fuckin oath.*

d. Personal Background

Tabel 20
Australian English Swear Words Referring to Personal Background

No	List of Australian English swear words
1.	Derro
2.	Bogan
3.	Sheep shagger

Table 20 shows three (3) swear words referring to personal background. These swear words often target a person's identity, social status, or personal traits with the intent to insult or demean. Examples include: *Derro, Bogan,* and *Sheep shagger.*

DISCUSSION

Based on the conclusions of the research obtained from the data collection process, a total of 32 (thirty-two) Australian English swear words used by native speakers were found. These words are categorized based on their forms, namely words (11), phrases (13), and clauses (8). In addition, the functions identified include drawing attention, discredit, provocation, interpersonal identification, expression of emotion, emphasis, and aggression. Based on their references, the swear words are divided into four categories: sex, excrement, religion, and personal background. All of these research findings are supported by various theories, including sociolinguistic theory, intercultural communication, miscommunication, and theories of swear words in terms of their form, function, and reference.

As a comparison, the researcher reviewed five previous studies to identify their similarities with this study.

The first study was conducted by Budasi (2012) entitled *A Comparison of Swear Words in Indonesian and Balinese Languages.* The results showed three forms of swear words: (1) in the form of words, such as *babi* and *setan* in Indonesian, and *cicing* and *rangda* in Balinese; (2) in the form of phrases, such as *dasar buaya* (animal name), *dasar pelacur* (personal background), *dasar tai* (excrement), *dasar gila* (situation), and *dasar setan* (spirit); and (3) in the form of clauses. This study is similar to the present research because both examine the forms of swear words (words, phrases, clauses) as well as their references. The

difference is that in Australian English swear words, the references are only found in sex, excrement, religion, and personal background.

The second study was conducted by Arsana (2017) entitled *An Analysis of Balinese Swear Words Among the Northern Balinese Teenagers in Seririt District in Their Daily Conversation.* This study focused on teenagers in Seririt and found 16 swear words categorized into several groups, such as religion (*pirata*), sex (*naskleng/kleng, peletan, celak, teli*), excrement (*sien teli, tai*), animal (*cicing, bojog*), personal background (*bencong, sundel*), mental illness (*lengeh, buduh*), and sexual activities (*ngangkuk/mekatuk*). Similar to the first study, this research also shares a similarity with the present study in that both discuss the references of swear words.

The third study was conducted by Harismayanti (2017) entitled *An Analysis of Swear Words Used by the Teenagers in Singaraja.* This research identified three forms of swear words: (1) monomorphemic words (e.g., *pirate ancestor, pletan* meaning male genital), (2) polymorphemic words (e.g., *matan* meaning eyes, *polone* meaning brain), and (3) phrases and clauses (e.g., *ndas teli* meaning female genital, *lengeh buah* meaning very crazy, *lengeh ti cai* meaning you are very crazy, *gebuh bungut nanine* meaning you are a liar). The similarity with this study lies in the classification of structural forms, both monomorphemic and polymorphemic words.

The fourth study was conducted by Dewi et al. (2017) entitled *An Analysis of Balinese Swear Words Used in Cempaga Village.* This study focused on the social and cultural functions of swear words in Cempaga Village. The method used was qualitative through observation and interviews, although its focus on a particular age group (25–60 years old) made the results less general. The similarity with the present study is that both used interviews as the main method and involved adult subjects.

The fifth study was conducted by Yani et al. (2017) entitled *A Comparative Study of American and Balinese Swear Words.* Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study found that swear words in American English and Balinese not only serve negative functions but also have positive ones, such as strengthening intimacy and community solidarity. Its similarity with the present research is in discussing the functions of swear words, particularly the negative ones such as provocation and aggression.

In general, Australian society is known for its egalitarianism, meaning there are no rigid or deep-rooted class distinctions as in many other countries. This principle emphasizes that everyone is equal under the law, deserves respect, and should be treated fairly. This value also allows those without elite connections or influential patrons to achieve success through hard work and determination. In communication, egalitarianism is reflected in a straightforward, direct, and sometimes coarse style of speech, including the use of swear words.

Swear words in Australian English are not always intended literally as insults but often function to express strong feelings, to emphasize speech, or even to strengthen solidarity among speakers. This is consistent with the egalitarian nature of society, which tends to be less formal in social interactions and often considers coarse language as part of humor or spontaneous expression.

However, for speakers from other cultures, such as the Balinese, these words may be misunderstood as serious insults because of different levels of taboo. This is where the potential for cross-cultural communication conflicts arises, especially in Bali, which is a major destination for Australian tourists. The results of this study show 32 swear words used in Australian English, consisting of words (11), phrases (13), and clauses (8). In terms of their functions, these words were used to draw attention (5), discredit (9), provoke (4), mark interpersonal identification (3), express emotion (9), emphasize (3), and show aggression (4). Meanwhile, in terms of reference, the swear words are divided into the categories of sex (16), excrement (7), religion (4), and personal background (3).

D. CONCLUSION

Swear words are used to convey strong feelings, to deliver insults, and to strengthen speech; however, they are often considered culturally taboo and are not intended literally. Every language, including Balinese and Australian English, has its own list of swear words, so misunderstandings of these words can lead to problems. Conflicts may occur when Balinese speakers misinterpret common words in Australian English as swear words. This highlights the importance of paying attention to cross-cultural communication. The results of the study found a total of 32 swear words, which were then grouped into several categories. Based on their form, they consist of words (11), phrases (13), and clauses (8). Based on their function, they include to draw attention (5), to discredit (9), provocation (4), interpersonal identification (3), express emotion (9), emphasize (3), and aggression (4). Meanwhile, based on their reference, they are divided into four categories: sex (16), excrement (7), religion (4), and personal background (3).

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