

## The Utterances of Swear Word by Indonesian Boy in Tembung Village

Siti Aisyah<sup>1</sup>, Mutia Sari Devi<sup>2\*</sup>, Merlin Fauziah Rahma<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Program Studi Pariwisata, Universitas Imelda Medan, Medan, Indonesia

Email: <sup>1</sup>aisyahmk1108@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>mutiasaridevi88@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>merlinfr123@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This study aimed to find out the kinds of swear word that the boy uttered and the reason why he uttered the swear words in Medan. The subject of this research is an Indonesian boy named RAS. He is 7 years old. This research used descriptive qualitative design. The data was taken from conversation of RAS. The conversation was taken from recording technique and observing technique. The research recorded and observed RAS while played with his friends. The result shows that There are four types of swear word that are found in RAS utterances. They are: Excretory Term (tai, kentut), Body function Term (kepala, pantat), Animal Term (monyet, anjing, babi), Death term (mati). Furthermore, there are three reasons why speakers utter swear words, among others: Power and Control, Humor, and Self- Expression. The findings emphasize that the context in which swearing occurs is essential in understanding why certain words are chosen and what purpose they serve in the conversation.*

**Keywords:** Utterance, Swear Word, Boy.

### INTRODUCTION

Language is a valuable asset for humans, intricately linked to every aspect of human activity and interaction. As Chaer (2003) notes, language functions as a verbal tool for communication. It is made up of arbitrary sound symbols that communities use to connect, communicate, and establish a sense of identity. This highlights the essential interdependence of language and society—one cannot exist without the other. The study of how language relates to people in social contexts falls under the field of sociolinguistics, which explores various dimensions of language use within society, including different language levels and variations.

Each individual selects particular language variations that reflect their personal identity or the group they belong to. For instance, people often choose words that are culturally understood to be inappropriate or offensive when they wish to express strong emotions. These are known as swearing words (Friyanto & Ashadi, 2020). Such expressions, while frowned upon in certain settings, can carry significant emotional weight or social meaning, highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of language in shaping human interactions.

In communication, people will have various intonation when speak. If the people are angry, they usually use swear words to emphasize their emotion when they speak. In line with (Prayuda et al., 2019) states that Swear words are the strong language that is expressed by the person to express their powerful emotion. Swearing a form of linguistic expression which is often referred to bad language (Zacharias et al., 2016). Swear words or abuse words are the words that are usually used to abuse, as the result of reaction toward unwanted things occurred. It consists of expression that is used by people to abuse, whether to abuse another or themselves.

Swearing is a part of most people's language repertoire, even though it is not typically formally taught in schools like other types of language. Instead, individuals often pick up swear words from peers, parents, or through exposure to media (Nicolau & Sukanto, 2014). In many societies, the use of swear words is generally frowned upon and regarded as offensive. However, in recent times, swearing has become less of a taboo and is more frequently used in everyday life. Swear words are often employed as a way to express strong emotions, such as fear, joy, anger, or excitement (Güvendir, 2015). The specific curse words people

choose to use are typically aligned with the particular emotion they wish to convey. Despite their common use, swearing can have negative social consequences. It can be seen as a sign of lower education or lack of refinement, and it can also have a harmful effect on others (Kristiano & Ardi, 2018).

According to Wardhaugh (2010), taboo subjects can vary significantly across cultures and societies, including topics like sex, death, bodily functions, excretion, religious matters, and politics. However, in analyzing these topics, the author might expand these categories by referencing additional sources that could further illuminate the possible range of taboo subjects. Below, the author outlines several specific categories of taboo words: **1) Copulative Terms;** Copulative terms refer to words that connect these individuals, often in a sexual context (Liedlich, 1973). For example, the word "f\*ck" is considered a copulative term, as it directly relates to sexual activity. **2) Excretory Term;** These words describe bodily excretion, such as feces or urine. For instance, the word "sh\*t" is commonly used to refer to feces and comes from Old English (Güvendir, 2015). Another example in this category is "piss," which refers to urine. **3) Body Function Term;** These terms pertain to the human sex organs and reproductive systems. **4) Sexual Irregularities Term;** Words like "bitch" and "chick" fall under this category, typically used in a derogatory manner towards women. **5) Animal Term;** These swear words do not necessarily refer to dangerous or harmful animals but instead draw on the characteristics or behaviors of animals. For example, terms like "dog" or "bullsh\*t" are commonly used in swearing. **6) Death Terms;** This phrase is often used by individuals who are angry or frustrated with someone, expressing a strong desire for that person to leave or experience misfortune. **7) Racial Term;** The word is deeply tied to the history of racial oppression and continues to carry significant weight in contemporary discussions about race and the last **8) Religious Matters Term;** Swearing involving religious references often invokes the names of deities or sacred figures. People frequently use terms like "Jesus," "Christ," or "God d\*mn" when expressing shock, frustration, or pain.

Swear words have become a regular part of everyday language, whether people are aware of it or not. Some individuals might even use swear words without realizing it, and this applies not only to adults but also to children. In fact, children might use swear words without fully understanding their implications, often picking them up from their environment—whether from family members, peers, or exposure to media (Sugawara & Nikaido, 2014). Children typically use swear words when they are upset, annoyed, or in pain, but they may also do so to draw attention or to project a sense of maturity. For example, in the writer's village, a child named Rafiq Alawi Sipahutar (RAS), who was angry with his brother, once exclaimed, "kayak monyet kau!"—a phrase that roughly translates to "you're like a monkey!" This was an instance where the child used swear words as a way to express his frustration and anger. There are several reasons why a child may use inappropriate language. Sometimes, a child may use a word accidentally, unknowingly repeating what they have heard without understanding its inappropriateness or meaning. They might swear to intimidate others or seek attention and reactions. Additionally, children may resort to hurtful language when they are upset. The attention a child receives for using inappropriate words can come from various sources, including parents, other children, or the home environment.

When parents or other adults hear a young child using inappropriate language, their typical reactions may include laughing or expressing surprise, but they often avoid confronting the issue head-on. This can confuse the child, making it harder to deal with the situation properly. It's crucial, however, for adults to address the use of inappropriate language promptly and directly when it happens.

Children are like sponges, absorbing everything they hear, especially swear words (Purnama et al., 2022). They often repeat what they hear and use it in conversations with others. There's something unique about how children react to swear words—they tend to be more drawn to them than to more polite or "proper" language. This fascination likely arises because swear words are perceived as more exciting. To children, people who use swear words often seem more like the rebellious or daring characters they see in movies (Setyaningtias et al., 2023). This sense of excitement and the perceived coolness associated with swear words is a big reason why children are attracted to using them.

Given this phenomenon, the researcher is motivated to carry out a study on this topic in Tembung Village, located in Medan. The primary objective of the research is to examine the various forms and types of swear words used by Rafiq Alawi Sipahutar (RAS) and to explore the reasons behind his use of these words.

## METHOD

This study follows a qualitative research design. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), qualitative research involves collecting data in the form of words rather than numbers, with the aim of describing specific situations, events, or phenomena, often in a narrative style. By employing a qualitative approach,

the researcher intends to gather comprehensive information and provide a detailed understanding of the issues, cases, or events under investigation (Saniada et al., 2023).

The subject of this research is a 7-year-old boy named RAS, and the object of the study is the collection of swear words he uses. The researcher focuses on analyzing the types of swear words RAS uses in his conversations and aims to understand the underlying reasons for his choice of language.

To collect data, the researcher used a checklist based on Wardhaugh's theory to classify the different types of swear words RAS uses. Meanwhile, to explore the reasons behind his swearing, the researcher applied Anderson and Trudgill's theory. The data collection process involved several steps. First, the researcher observed RAS while he was playing with his friends to capture any conversations that included swear words. Second, these conversations were recorded. The next step was to organize the data by inputting it into a table. Once the data was compiled, the researcher used the checklist to identify the types of swear words based on Wardhaugh's categorization. Finally, the researcher analyzed the reasons behind RAS's use of swear words, referring to Anderson and Trudgill's theory for explanation.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There are many different types of swear words commonly used in everyday conversation, each with its own distinct characteristics that set it apart from others. When classifying these swear words, the researcher may draw upon additional references to make sure that all potential categories found in the data are represented. These categories might include **Copulative Terms, Excretory Terms, Body Function Terms, Sexual Irregularities Terms, Animal Terms, Death Terms, Racial Terms, and Religious Matters Terms.**

From the data analysis, it was found that RAS used a total of 37 swear words while playing with his friends. These swear words were then grouped into five main categories. The analysis revealed that Excretory Terms were the most frequently used by RAS. The table below provides a summary of the frequency with which each type of swear word appeared in the data.

Table 1: Types of Swear Words

No	Categories of Swear Words	Words	Frequency
1	Excretory Terms	Tai, Kentut	18
2	Body Function Terms	Kepala, Pantat, Kimbek	7
3	Animal Terms	Monyet, Anjing, Babi, Bodat	5
4	Death Terms	Mati	4
5	Racial Terms	Longor, Paok	3

### a. Excretory Term

The term '**excretory**' is derived from the verb '**excrete**,' which refers to the process of expelling solid waste from the body through the anus. In this context, '**tai**' (or '**shit**' in English) is used as a slang term to describe the act of excreting waste. Words like '**tai**' are classified as **excretory terms**, which are often used to express strong emotions like anger or frustration. Below are a few examples of how '**excretory terms**' are used in everyday language:

1. "**Tai lah kau bang! Kok kau ambil punya ku?**"

("You are shit! Why do you take mine?")

In this example, RAS uses the word '**tai**' to express intense anger towards his brother for taking something that belongs to him. The use of '**tai**' here is similar to using '**shit**' in English to convey a strong feeling of irritation or frustration.

2. "**Ih, tai! Kalah aku!**"

("Oh, shit! I lost!")

Here, RAS uses '**tai**' to express disappointment after losing a game. The word is used to emphasize his frustration and surprise at the outcome, showing how **excretory terms** can be linked to a sense of failure or anger

3. **“Kentut lah kau, kok kau pulak yang menang! Aku lah. Licik kali kau!”**

("You're farting, you're not the one winning, I am! How cunning you are!")  
In this instance, RAS uses the word **'kentut'** (which means **'fart'** in English) as another excretory term. He uses it to vent his anger at someone he feels has cheated him during a game. Just like **'tai'**, **'kentut'** is used to express frustration, but it also adds a sense of mockery or disbelief at the situation, especially when someone has unfairly won.

**b. Body function Term**

The term **'body function'** refers to words that relate to various parts of the body. In this research, the researcher discovered that RAS frequently used the words **'kepala'** (head) and **'pantat'** (ass) as swear words to express certain emotions. These words, associated with body parts, were often used to convey strong feelings, such as anger or frustration. Below are a few examples of how body-related terms were used in RAS's speech:

1. **“Eh, pantat! Maling kau ya!”**

("Eh, ass! You are a thief!")

In this example, RAS uses **'pantat'** (ass) as an insult to express his anger. He says this after his toy was stolen by a friend, and by calling his friend **'pantat,'** RAS is directing his frustration and irritation towards the person who took his toy.

2. **His friend:** “Fiq, ini punya ku!”

("Fiq, this is mine!")

**RAS:** “**Kepala** kau! Punya ku ini!”

("Your head! This is mine!")

Here, RAS uses the word **'kepala'** (head) to assert his ownership of an item. His friend claims that the item is theirs, but RAS insists that it belongs to him. By calling his friend **'kepala,'** RAS is trying to emphasize that the item belongs to him, not his friend.

3. **“Kimbek-kimbek, bisa pulak kek gitu.”**

The word **'kimbek'** is a slang term used for **'vagina'** and, in this case, is used as a swear word. The sentence reflects RAS's annoyance with something going wrong during a game of marbles with his friends. Although **'kimbek'** is a body-related term, it is used here more to express personal frustration or disappointment rather than to insult anyone else directly.

**c. Animal Terms:**

Animal-related swear words are those that reference animals, often used to express emotions or insults based on the characteristics typically associated with these animals. In this study, the researcher found that words like **'anjing'** (dog), **'monyet'** (monkey), and **'babi'** (pig) were commonly used by RAS. These terms are often employed not for their literal meaning but to convey frustration, insult, or challenge. Below are examples of how RAS used animal-related swear words:

1. **“Apa? Sini kau kalo berani njing!”**

("What? Come here, dog, if you are brave!")

In this instance, RAS uses the word **'anjing'** (dog) to challenge his friend, indicating that he is ready to fight. By calling his friend a dog, RAS is invoking the image of aggression or a challenge, typical of how animals like dogs are portrayed in conflicts.

2. **“Rakus kali kau kayak monyet!”**

("You are very greedy like a monkey!")

Here, RAS uses **'monyet'** (monkey) as a metaphor to describe his friend's greed. Monkeys are often associated with being mischievous or greedy, and by calling his friend a monkey, RAS is highlighting this negative trait in a humorous or insulting way.

3. **“Ih, babi lah!”**

("Ugh, pig!")

In this spontaneous outburst, RAS calls someone a **‘babi’** (pig). The use of **‘babi’** is another example of how animal terms are used in frustration. The term **‘babi’** here likely reflects a sense of disgust, often used to insult someone's behavior or actions.

4. **“Woy bodat, mau kemana kau?”**

("Hey monkey, where are you going?")

The word **‘bodat’** here, which is a playful variation of **‘monyet’** (monkey), is used between close friends in a casual, joking manner. This shows how animal-related terms can sometimes be used in a non-serious, affectionate way among friends without the intention to insult, but rather to tease or show familiarity.

**d. Death Term:**

The **‘death term’** is commonly used in situations where the speaker is frustrated or angry with someone. By using these terms, speakers often wish that the other person would go away or disappear. It reflects a desire to end the interaction. In this study, the example given is:

1. **“Ya udah kalau gak percaya, mati lah kau situ!”**

("It's ok if you don't believe me, go to hell!")

When RAS uses the word **‘mati’** (death), he is expressing annoyance and frustration, especially after his friend doubted him. The phrase **‘go to hell’** here is not meant literally, but is used to convey a strong desire for the other person to stop bothering them or leave.

**e. Racial Terms:**

Racial terms are highly offensive and insulting words used to demean others, often based on their racial or ethnic characteristics. These terms are deeply hurtful and can perpetuate negative stereotypes. In this study, RAS used racial terms in the following examples:

1. **“Longgor kali anak ini kurasa! Silahkan biar aku yang bantu!”**

("What stupid you are! Here, I will help you!")

**‘Longgor’** is a derogatory term meaning "stupid" or "idiot." RAS uses it here to insult his friend, implying that the friend is foolish for not being able to open a box. The use of **‘longgor’** is a racial term in this context because it is used to demean the person, making them feel inferior based on their perceived lack of intelligence or ability.

2. **“Paok-paok, enggak kek gitu! Iss, paok kali anak ini bah!”**

("What stupid you are! It's not like that. How stupid you are!")

The word **‘paok’** is used similarly to **‘longgor,’** meaning "stupid." RAS directs this racial slur at his friend for making a mistake. Again, the term is used to insult and criticize the friend's actions, using a racialized nickname that carries negative connotations.

**The Reasons for Swearing**

Swearing can serve multiple purposes in human communication, and there are several reasons why people, including children, use swear words. Research has identified seven main motivations for swearing, which include: pain relief, asserting power and control, non-violent retribution, humor, peer and social bonding, self-expression, and psychological and physical health. In this study, the researcher will focus on understanding the specific reasons behind the swearing observed in RAS's recorded conversations.

**1. Power and Control**

One of the primary reasons people use swear words is to assert power and control, particularly when they are feeling vulnerable or threatened. Swearing in these instances can serve to boost confidence, indicate strength, and show defiance. It can help individuals resist being perceived as weak or powerless.

Example:

“Apa? Sini kau kalo berani njing!”

("What? Come here, dog, if you are brave!")

In this case, RAS uses the word ‘anjing’ (dog) to challenge his friend. By using this swear word, RAS signals that he is not afraid and is ready to fight back. The insult serves as a way of asserting power in a tense situation, making it clear that he is not in a submissive position.

## 2. Humor

Swearing can also be used in a lighthearted or humorous way. Sometimes people use swear words to joke around or tease others, without any intention to offend seriously. In these situations, swearing can be a way to bond socially and share a moment of laughter.

Example:

“Rakus kali kau kayak monyet!”

("You are very greedy like a monkey!")

Here, RAS calls his friend a ‘monyet’ (monkey) as a playful insult. It’s meant to tease his friend for being greedy, but the intention is more about humor and fun than genuine anger or offense. After saying this, they both laugh, showing that it was used in a lighthearted, joking context.

## 3. Self-Expression:

Swearing is often a way for people to express their emotions, especially when they are feeling angry, frustrated, or upset. It allows individuals to verbalize their feelings in a more intense or dramatic way than regular words might convey. This can provide a sense of emotional release or help communicate strong feelings.

Examples:

1. “Tai lah kau bang! Kok kau ambil punya ku?”

("You are shit! Why do you take my mine?")

In this example, RAS uses the word ‘tai’ (shit) to express his anger. His brother has taken something that belongs to him, and the use of swear words serves as a way to vent his frustration and emphasize his displeasure.

2. “Eh, pantat! Maling kau ya!”

("Eh, ass! You are a thief!")

Similarly, RAS uses the word ‘pantat’ (ass) as an insult to express his anger toward his friend, who has taken his toy. Here, the swear word emphasizes his irritation and disappointment, serving as an emotional release in response to the situation.

## Conclusion

After analyzing the data, the researcher identified **37 swear words** used by RAS during his interactions with friends, which were categorized into various types and reasons. The types of swear words observed in the study include **excretory terms, body function terms, animal terms, death terms, and racial terms**. Among these, **excretory terms** were the most frequently used, with **18 instances** of words like ‘tai’ and ‘kentut’ (fart).

The reasons behind RAS’s use of swear words can be grouped into three main categories: **power and control, humor, and self-expression**. These motivations reflect the various emotional and social functions that swearing serves for children, ranging from asserting dominance to bonding with peers or expressing frustration.

In light of these findings, the researcher encourages readers—especially parents and educators—to be mindful of their language choices. While expressing emotions through words is natural, it is important to remember that swearing can sometimes hurt others’ feelings and cause social discomfort. Using swear words regularly as a form of expression should be discouraged, as there are other more constructive ways to communicate emotions.

For parents, it is crucial to address inappropriate language directly and immediately when their child uses it. Engaging in discussions with other family members about how to consistently respond to such language will help establish clear expectations for the child and encourage healthier communication patterns. Consistency in addressing swearing is key to guiding children toward more respectful language use in the future.

## REFERENCES

- Bogdan, R and Biklen, S. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Chaer, A. (2003). *Linguistik Umum*. Rineka Cipta.
- Friyanto, F., & Ashadi, A. (2020). the Acquisition of Swear Words By Students in Central Kalimantan. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya*, 13(2), 407–415. <https://doi.org/10.26858/retorika.v13i2.13803>
- Güvendir, E. (2015). Why are males inclined to use strong swear words more than females? An evolutionary explanation based on male intergroup aggressiveness. *Language Sciences*, 50(April), 133–139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2015.02.003>
- Hughes, G. (2006). *An Encyclopedia of Swearing :The Social History Of Oaths Profanity Foul Language And Ethnic Slurs In The English – speaking world*. United States Of America: M.E.Sharpe.
- Kristiano, J. T., & Ardi, P. (2018). Investigating The Role of Swear Words in Abusive. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 21(2), 191–198.
- Liedlich, R. (1973). *Coming to Terms With Language: An Anthology*. Wiley: New York.
- Muhammad, R. A., Manurung, K., & Wahyudin, W. (2022). Study on the Implementation of Word Chain Game in Teaching Vocabulary Mastery. *E-Journal of ELTS (English Language Teaching Society)*, 9(3), 223–234. <https://doi.org/10.22487/elts.v9i3.1878>
- Nicolau, M. F. S., & Sukamto, K. E. (2014). Male and Female Attitudes towards Swear Words: A Case Study at Binus International School. *K@Ta*, 16(2), 71–76. <https://doi.org/10.9744/kata.16.2.71-76>
- Prayuda, P. E., Suarnajaya, I. W., & Juniarta, P. A. K. (2019). The Analysis of Swear Words Used by the Characters in Moonlight. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 3(3), 138–146.
- Purnama, S., Indriani, Y. R., Latif, M. A., & ... (2022). Swearing and Emotional Development of Children Age 4-6 Years: An Ethnographic Study. ... *Anak Usia Dini ...*, 10, 377–386. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JJPAUD/article/view/52721>
- Saniada, K. N., Ramendra, D. P., & Mahendrayana, G. (2023). The Analysis of Swear Words Used by the Children in Poh Bergong Village. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 7(2), 75–82. <https://doi.org/10.23887/ijll.v7i2.32271>
- Setyaningtias, S., Heriyanto, E., & Muhid, A. (2023). Use of Swearing Words of Young Multicultural Students: A Sociolinguistics Study. *English Language and Education Spectrum*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.53416/electrum.v1i1.101>
- Sugawara, E., & Nikaido, H. (2014). No 主観的健康感を中心とした在宅高齢者における健康関連指標に関する共分散構造分析Title. *Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy*, 58(12), 7250–7257. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25246403><http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=PMC4249520>
- Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Six Editio). Blackwell.
- Zacharias, N. T., Sukanob-nicolau, M. F., Rani, K. R. V., Wattimena, R. U., Manara, C., & Kurniawan, B. (2016). *Ijelt*. 11(2).